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THE WORLD HAD CHANGED, AND NOBODY KNEW IT.

THERE WAS A FLURRY OF HEADLINES AND NEWS ARTICLES ABOUT THE HALF-MILE-HIGH GOLDEN GIANT THAT APPEARED OVERNIGHT IN GOLDEN GATE PARK.

NOW *THAT'S* NOT SOMETHING YOU'D SEE IN NORTH DAKOTA.

AWESOME, HUH?

SAY, YOU THINK IT'S ***REAL GOLD,*** HON?

San Fran

City and Park Services Fight Over Clean-Up Bills

New Slogan "Golden Gate and Golden Giant"

THE WORLD TODAY IS FILLED WITH CASUAL MIRACLES. TODAY'S WONDER IS TOMORROW'S NOVELTY AND THE DAY AFTER THAT'S TOURIST SPOT.

I MEAN, YOU WONDER WHY THEY'D LEAVE IT HERE, IF IT WAS REAL GOLD.

IT'S GOT TO BE WORTH A FORTUNE...

I LEFT MY HEART IN SAN FRANCISCO

IT'S ***NOT*** GOLD. THERE WAS A WHOLE THING ON THE ***INTERNET.*** SPECTROSCOPIC ANALYSIS SHOWS IT'S SOME FORM OF SUPER-HARD CARBON, PROBABLY ALIEN IN ORIGIN.

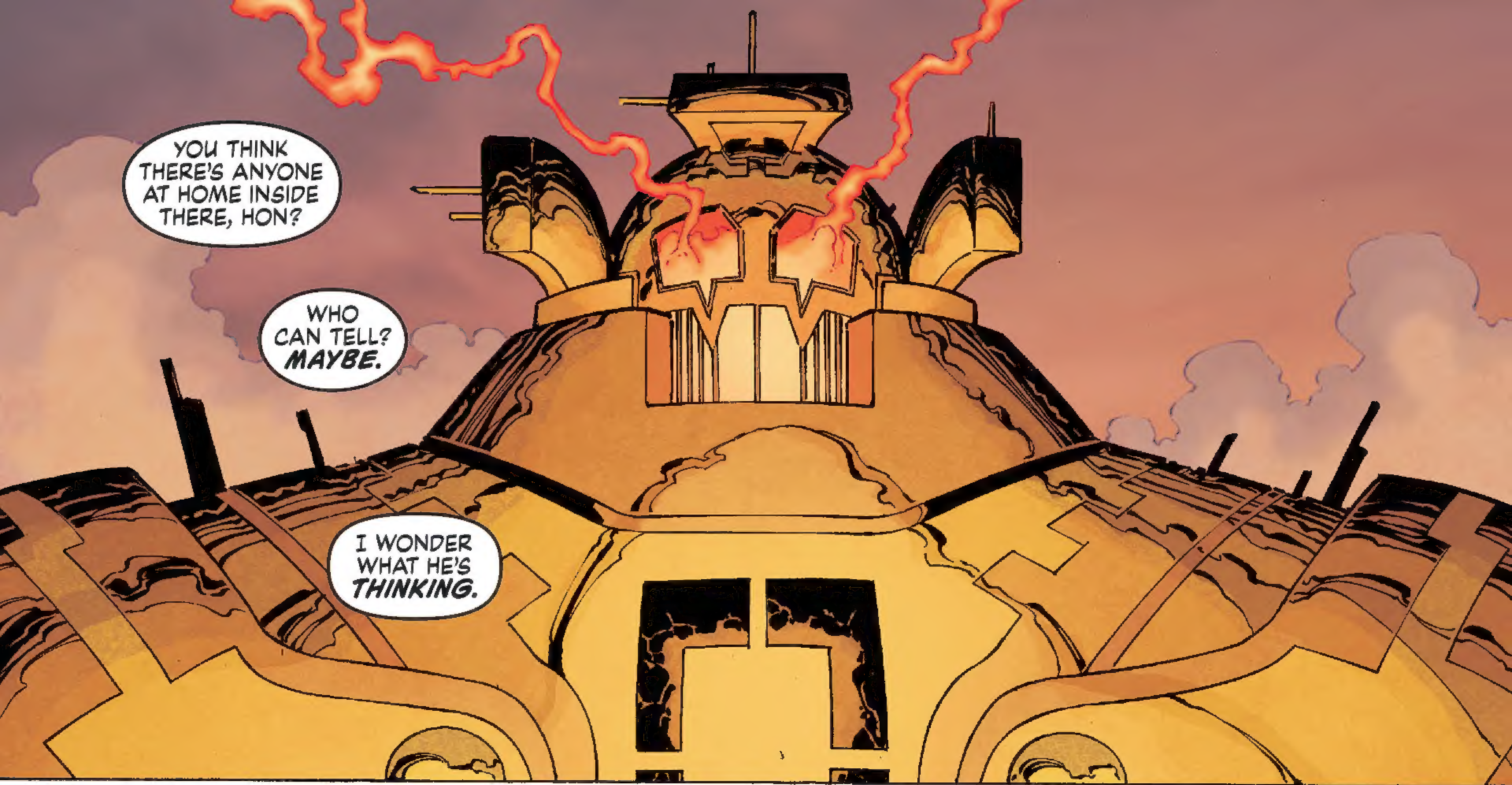
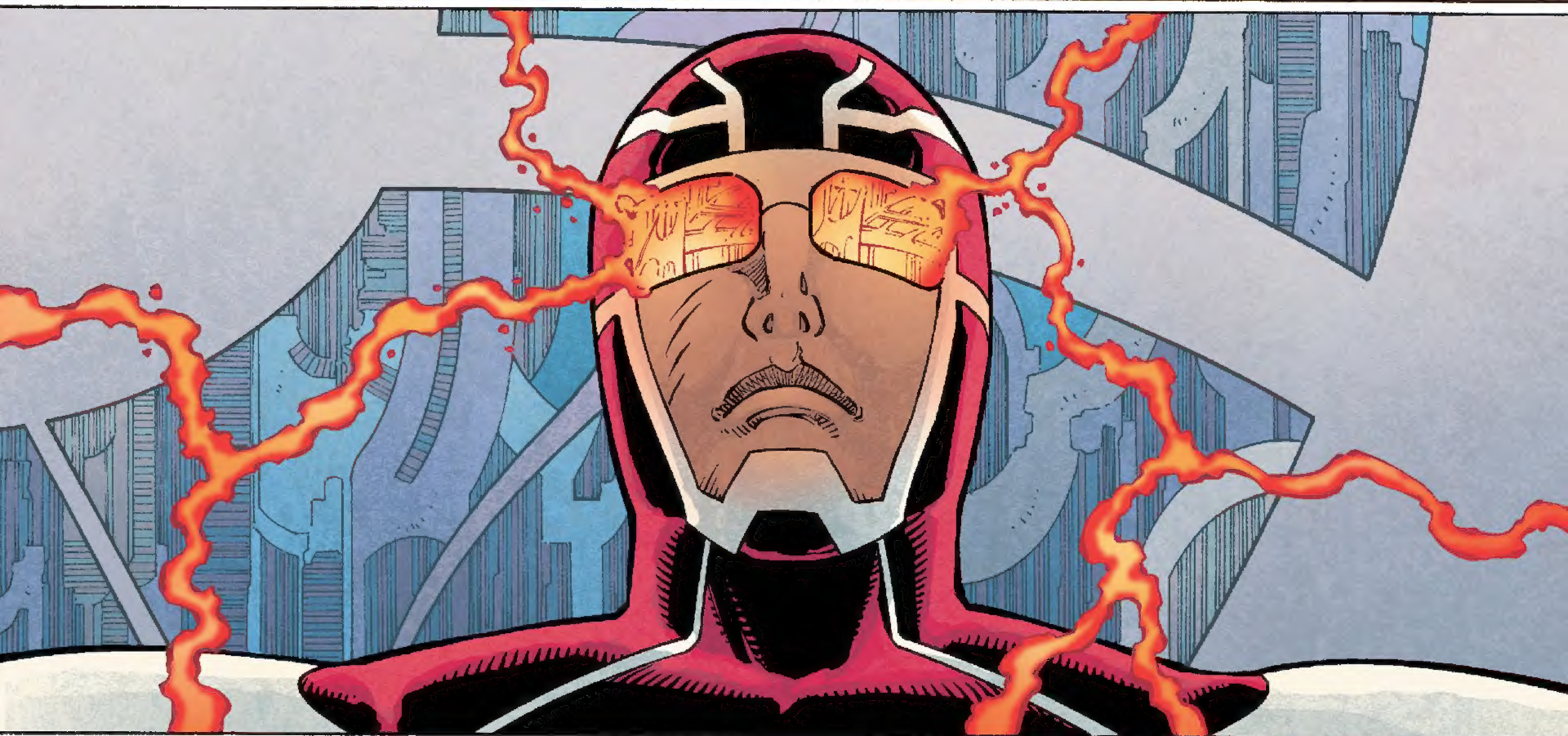
OH. ***PITY.*** I FIGURED IT COULD BE VALUABLE.

WHAT DOES IT ***DO?***

NOTHING.

MINE TRANSFORMS INTO A TRUCK.

I LIKE MINE BETTER.


YOU THINK THERE'S ANYONE AT HOME INSIDE THERE, HON?
WHO CAN TELL? *MAYBE.*
I WONDER WHAT HE'S *THINKING.*


AN *OBOLUS* FOR YOUR THOUGHTS, MAKKARI.
WHAT? I'M SORRY, IKARIS. I WAS *MILES* AWAY.
THINKING ABOUT ABSENT FRIENDS.

I WAS THINKING HOW *EMPTY* A CITY MADE FOR A HUNDRED OF US SEEMS WITH ONLY A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE IN IT.

IT'S *LONELY* HERE IN OLYMPIA. I CAN ALMOST UNDERSTAND WHY SERSI...

DAMN IT.

I'M NOT LONELY, OLD FRIEND.

RACE YOU DOWN THERE.

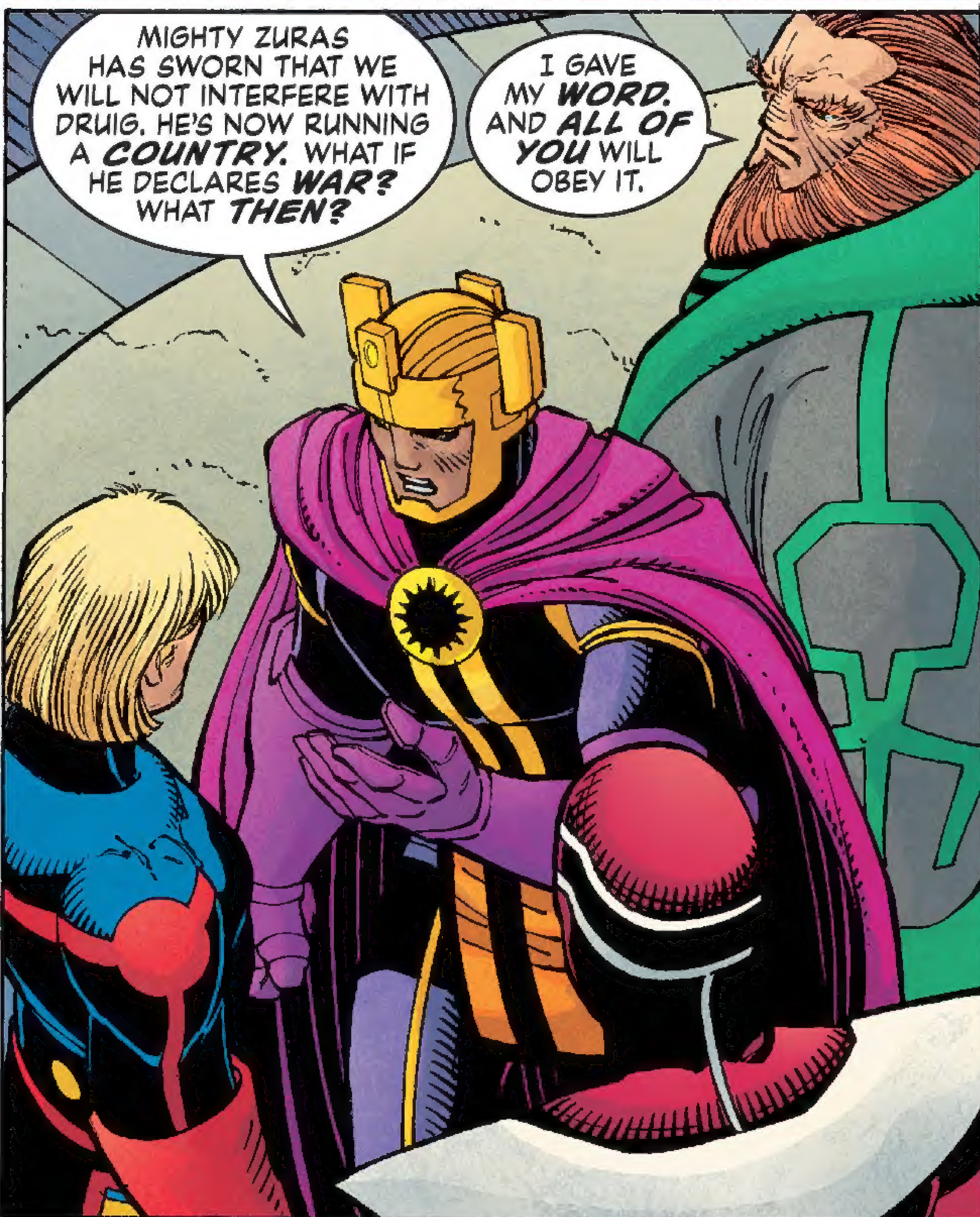
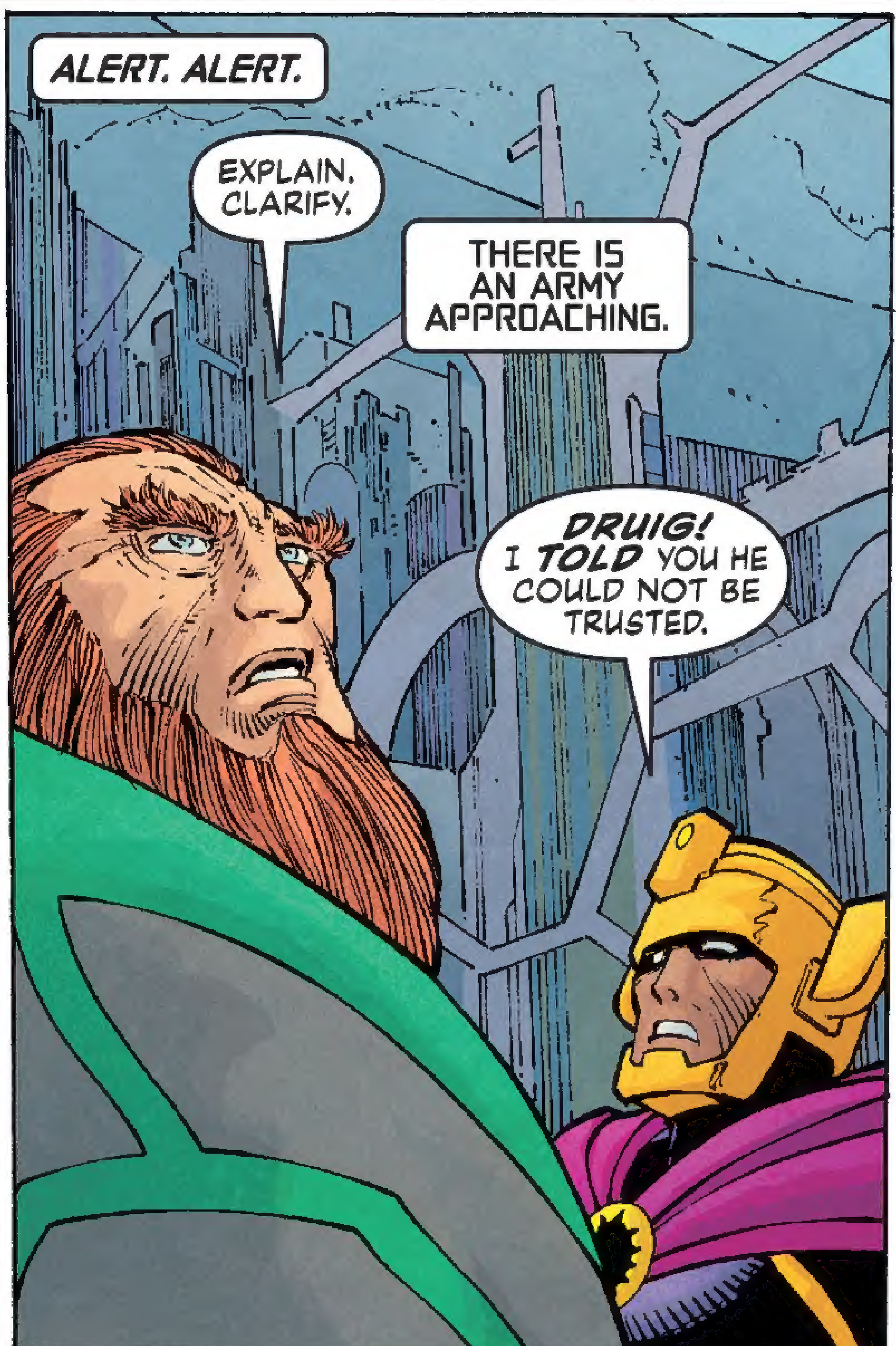
THIS IS *MONSTROUS,* ZURAS!

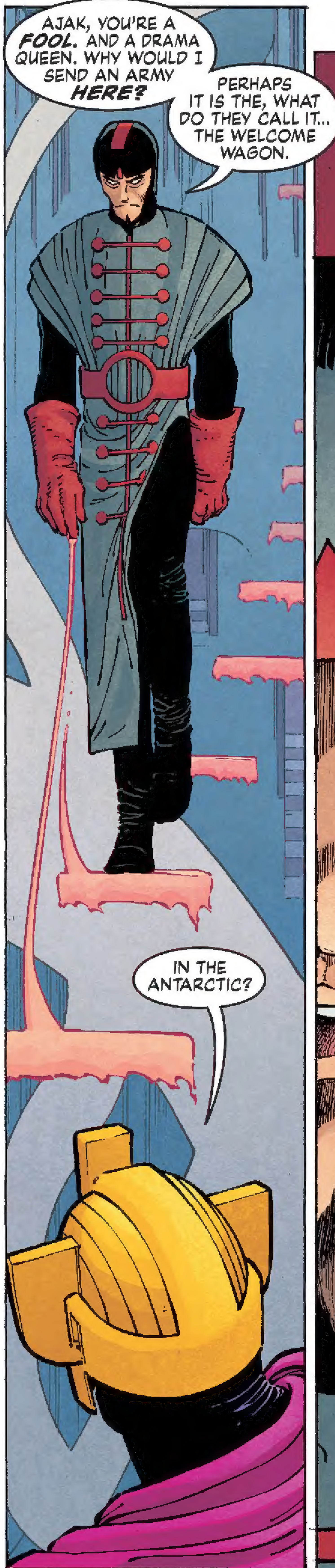
"IT IS MY *WILL,* AJAK. AND MY *WORD.* I WILL BROOK NO ARGUMENT."

THERE IS NO *CRIME* IN CHANGING YOUR MIND, MIGHTY ZURAS.

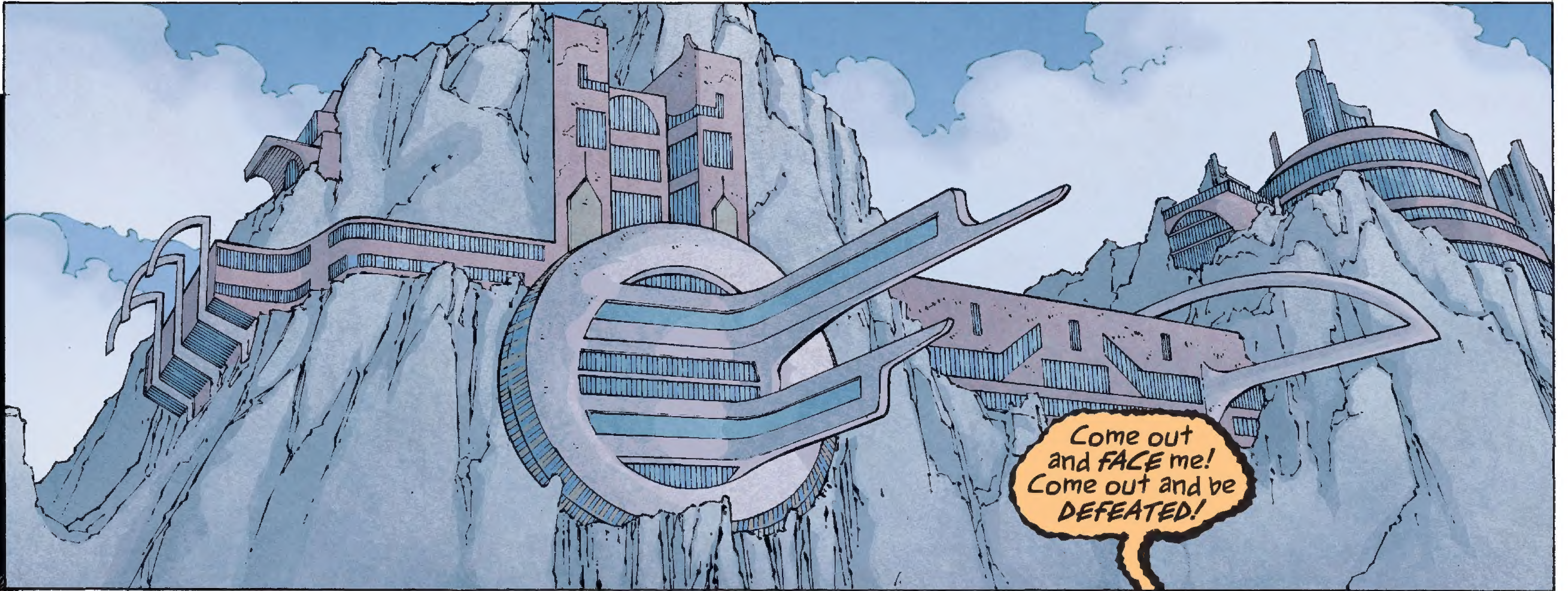
YOU GAVE YOUR *WORD* TO DRUIG, TRUE. BUT THE WORLD HAS *CHANGED.*


THE WORLD HAS CHANGED, AJAK, BUT I HAVE NOT.
I'M PRETTY FAS--
I WON.

WE ARE SWORN TO DEFEND LIFE AND TO DEFEND LIFE ON EARTH. DRUIG SEEKS ONLY DARKNESS. HE GLORIES IN PAIN. HE SCHEMES TO CONTROL THE WORLD.
YES. TIME AFTER TIME, HE SCHEMES AND HE TRIES...
AND I HAVE ALWAYS PREVENTED HIM.

MIGHTY ZURAS HAS SWORN THAT WE WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH DRUIG. HE'S NOW RUNNING A COUNTRY. WHAT IF HE DECLARES WAR? WHAT THEN?
I GAVE MY WORD. AND ALL OF YOU WILL OBEY IT.

ALERT. ALERT.
EXPLAIN. CLARIFY.
THERE IS AN ARMY APPROACHING.
DRUIG! I TOLD YOU HE COULD NOT BE TRUSTED.


AJAK, YOU'RE A **FOOL.** AND A DRAMA QUEEN. WHY WOULD I SEND AN ARMY ***HERE?***
PERHAPS IT IS THE, WHAT DO THEY CALL IT... THE WELCOME WAGON.
IN THE ANTARCTIC?


WHY DON'T WE GO AND ***SEE?***


Come out and ***FACE*** me! Come out and be ***DEFEATED!***
Come out and face the Deviants in honest battle!
FACE US! The world shall be ***OURS*** again.

CRAVEN ETERNALS! We have gathered from the corners and the dark places of the Earth to face you in combat...

COME! Taste the fury of KRA AND HIS ARMY!

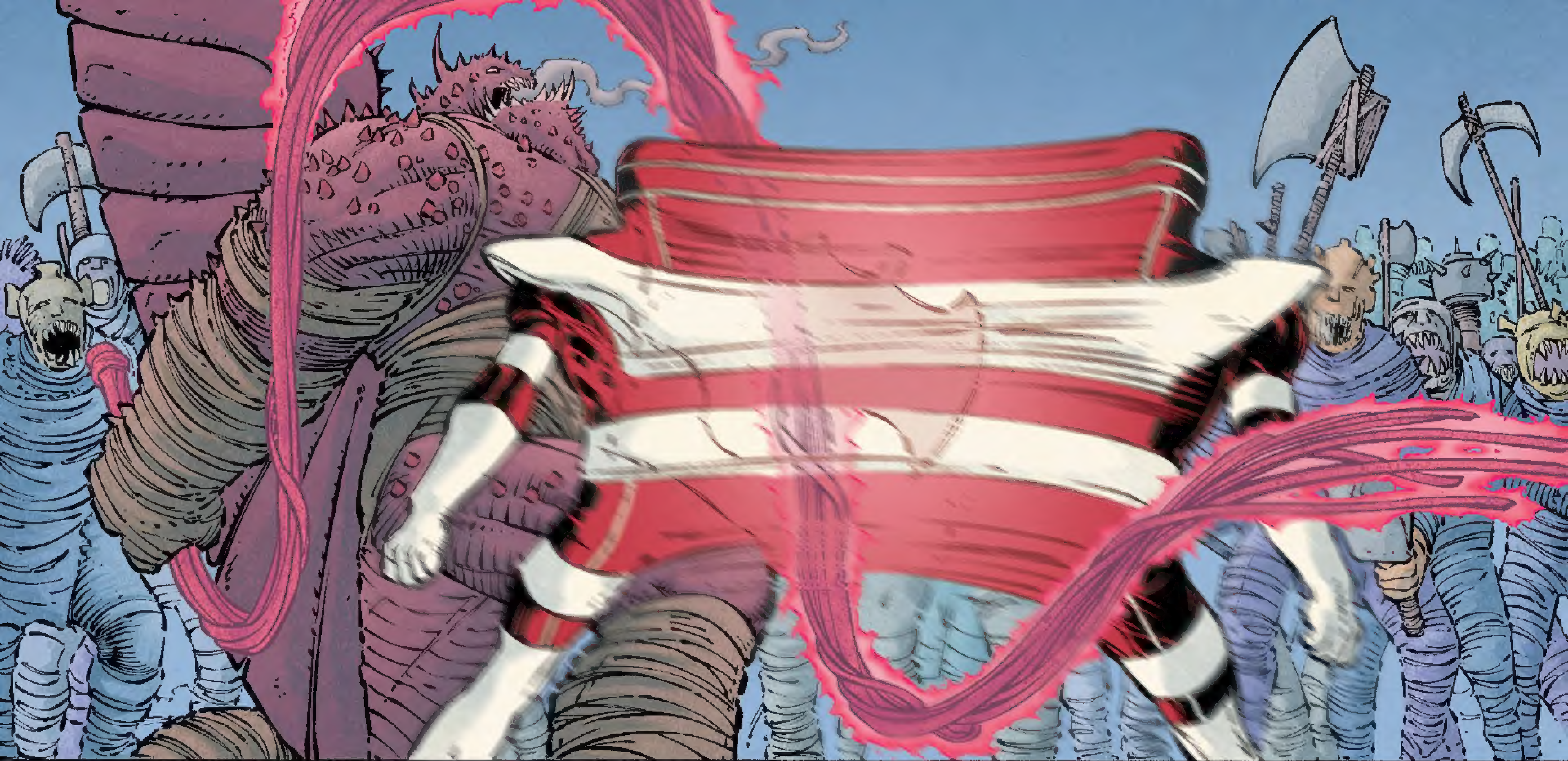
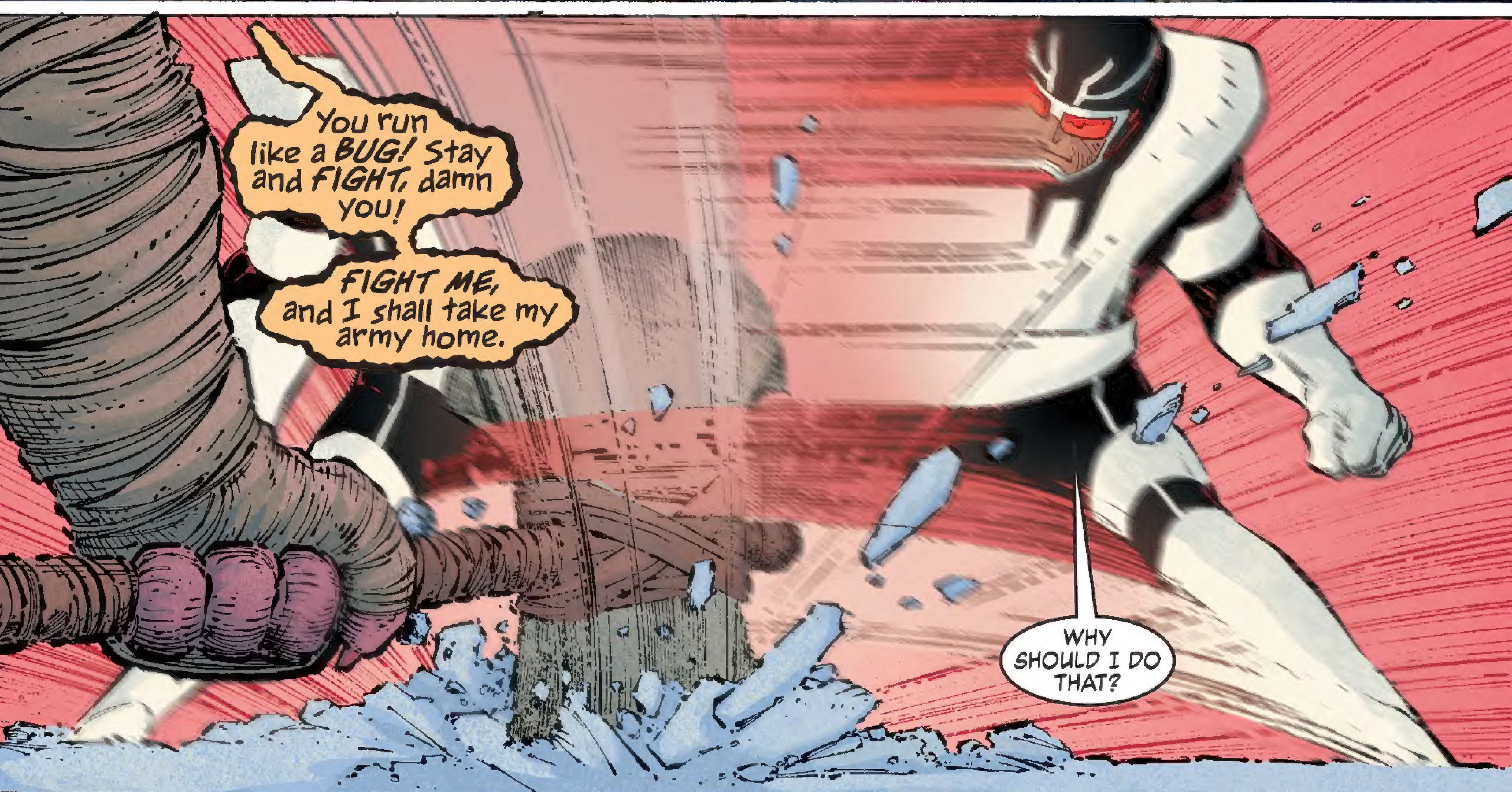
Yeah.


WE ARE HERE, KRA.


Four of you. Only four of you? This is not even a fight.
Four Eternals against six thousand Deviants...
That's scarcely a battle.


I HAVEN'T ROASTED DEVIANTS IN A LONG TIME...
THERE WILL NOT BE A BATTLE. THIS IS PURE FOOLISHNESS. WHY WOULD YOU DARE COME TO THIS PLACE? IT IS THE BEST-DEFENDED PLACE ON THE PLANET.
AND THE COLD WILL TAKE CARE OF MOST OF YOU, EVEN IF WE DO NOT.


Where are the rest of you? Where is MAKKARI?
I'M HERE, KRA. I WAS JUST INSPECTING YOUR TROOPS. I'M NOT IMPRESSED.



You run like a BUG! Stay and FIGHT, damn you!
FIGHT ME, and I shall take my army home.
WHY SHOULD I DO THAT?

According to the old tales, you Eternals do not ENJOY killing. Not even MY people. It pains you. Fight me, and the deaths of six thousand of the Changing People will not be on your conscience.

ACTUALLY, I ALWAYS ENJOYED IT.
YOU KNOW I'M FASTER THAN YOU, KRA. I COULD DISABLE YOU AND ALL YOUR TROOPS BEFORE YOU COULD FINISH BLINKING. WHY FIGHT ME WHEN YOU'LL LOSE?
You are FAST. I am STRONG. Let me propose another alternative. WIN, and I take my people away from here. LOSE, and we take your HEAD with us, as a TROPHY...

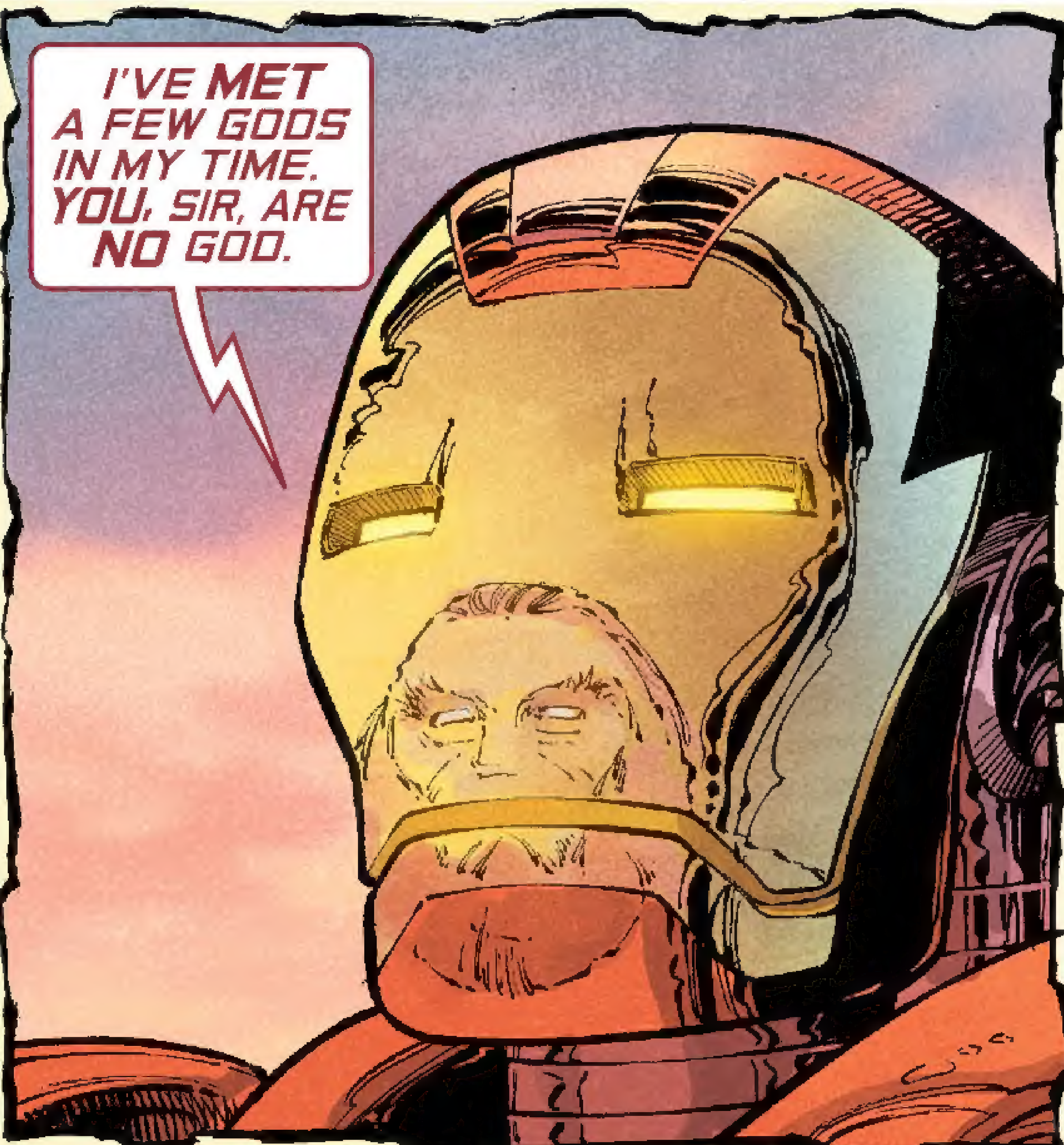

HI. I THINK THERE'S A RESERVATION HERE. FOR...
GOOD AFTERNOON, MISS SERSI.
MISTER STARK IS AT HIS TABLE.
HOW WILL I KNOW WHICH TABLE IS...

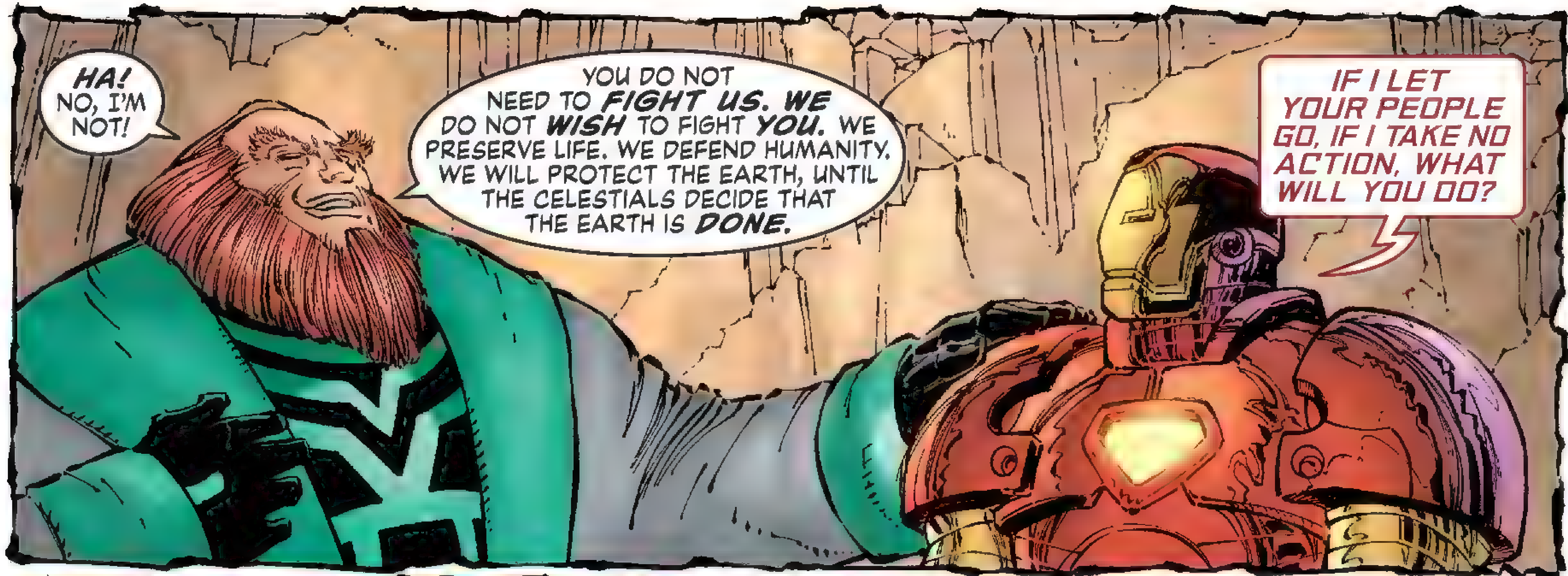

...HIS?
OH.
WE'RE THE ONLY ONES HERE...?

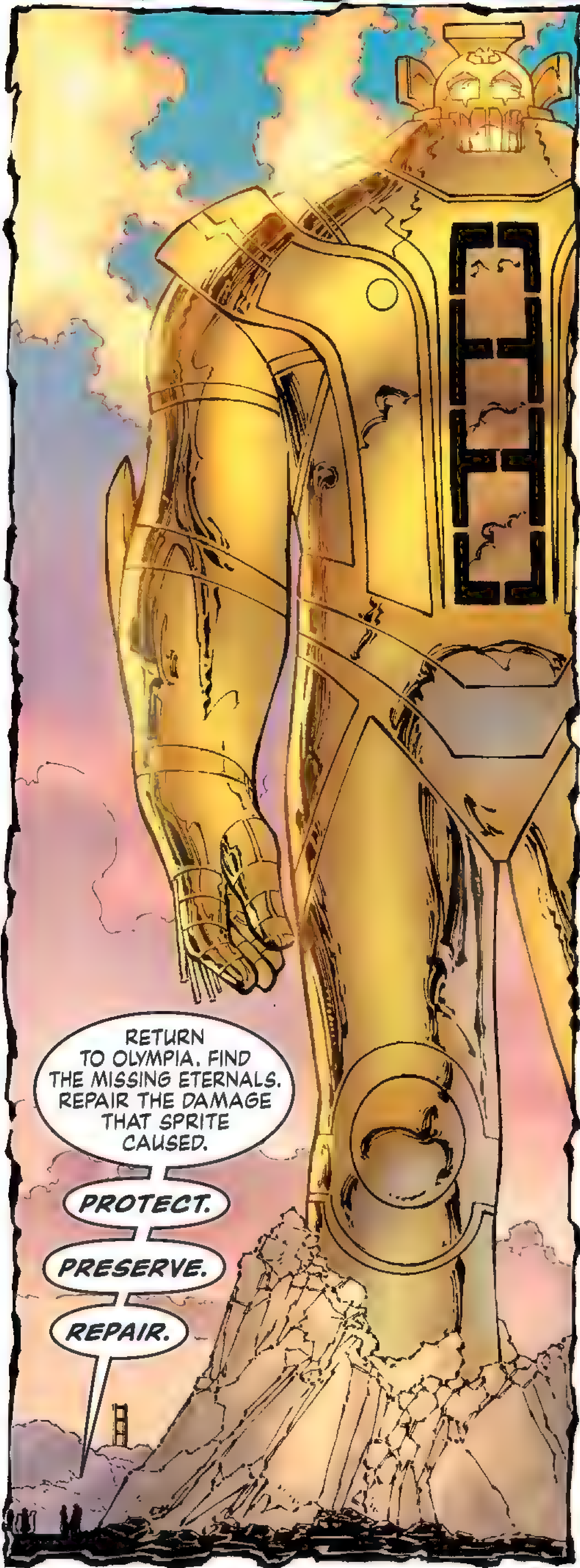

I WANTED THE PRIVACY. AND WE'RE HAVING A STARK INDUSTRIES BOARD MEETING HERE LATER THIS AFTERNOON.
YOU'RE A LOT SMALLER WHEN YOU AREN'T WEARING YOUR, UH...
I HEAR THAT A LOT. GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

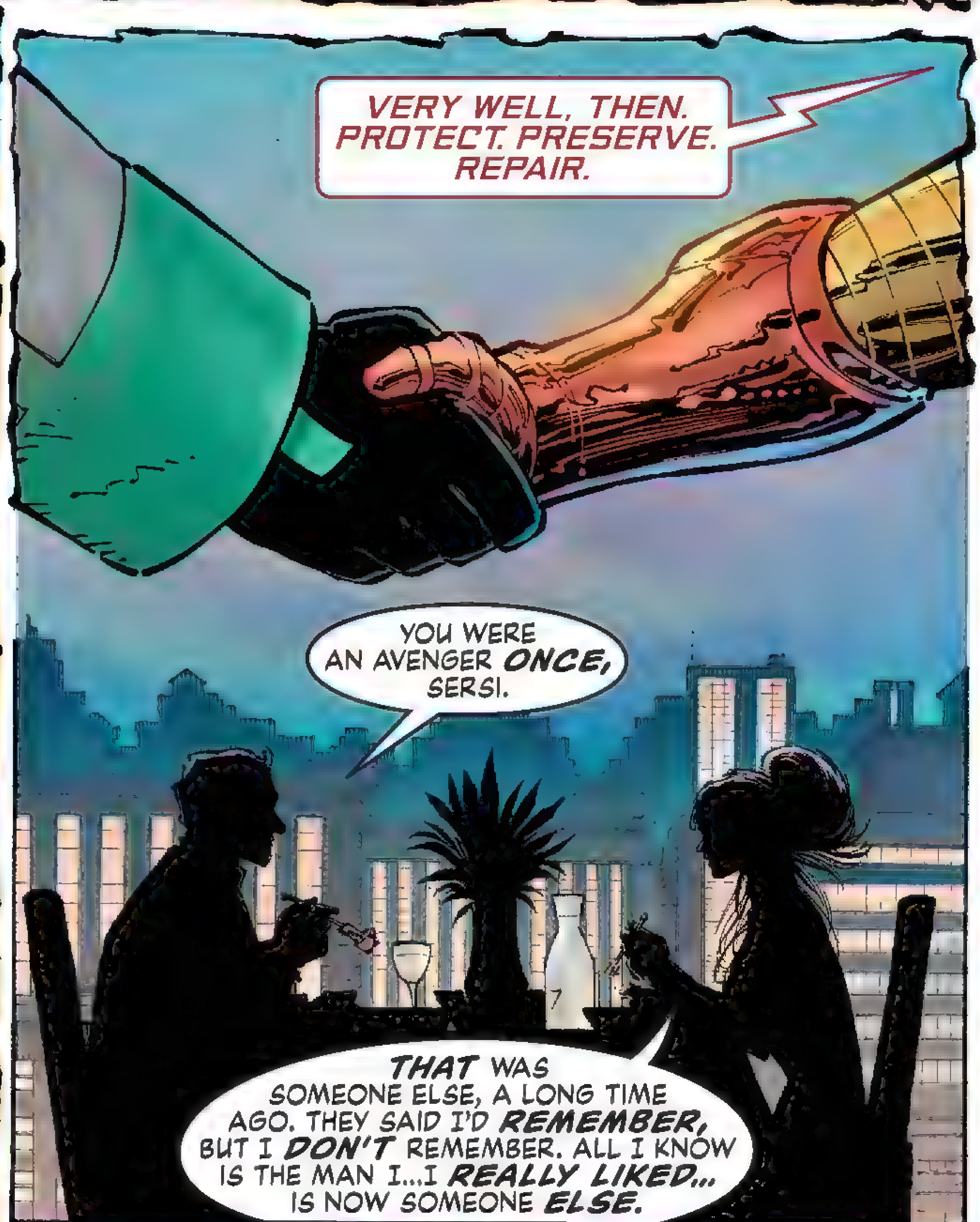

SO HAVE YOU GIVEN ANY MORE THOUGHT TO OUR CONVERSATION AT THE EMBASSY PARTY?
A LITTLE.
I'M NOT GOING TO REGISTER.


I THINK ZURAS AND I CAME TO AN AGREEMENT ON THAT...
MY PEOPLE AREN'T HEROES, IRON MAN.
WE HAVE BEEN HERE SINCE THE DAWN OF TIME. YOU ARE HOMO SAPIENS, WE ARE HOMO IMMORTALIS. WE WERE YOUR GODS.

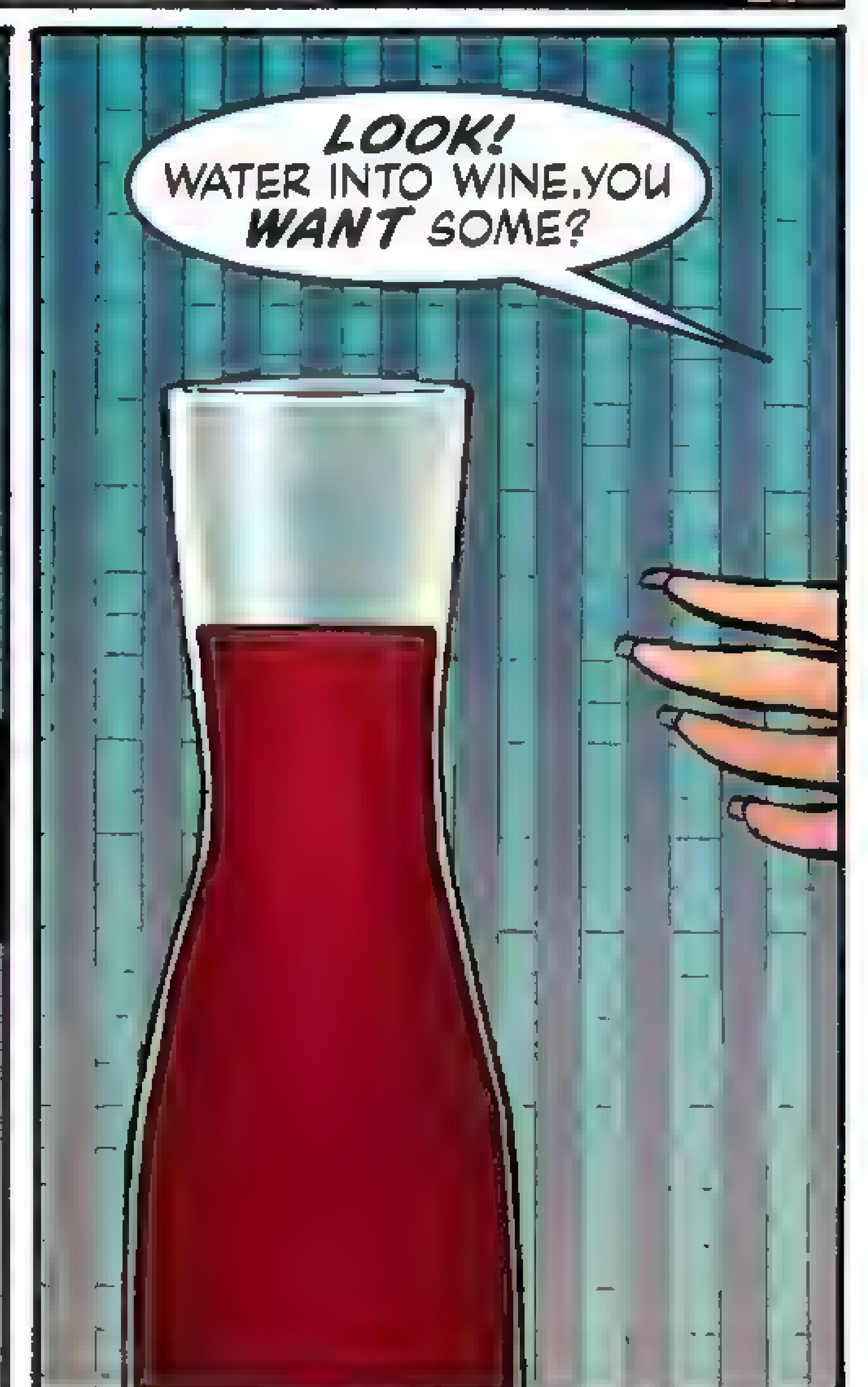

I'VE MET A FEW GODS IN MY TIME. YOU, SIR, ARE NO GOD.


HA! NO, I'M NOT!
YOU DO NOT NEED TO FIGHT US. WE DO NOT WISH TO FIGHT YOU. WE PRESERVE LIFE. WE DEFEND HUMANITY. WE WILL PROTECT THE EARTH, UNTIL THE CELESTIALS DECIDE THAT THE EARTH IS DONE.
IF I LET YOUR PEOPLE GO, IF I TAKE NO ACTION, WHAT WILL YOU DO?


RETURN TO OLYMPIA. FIND THE MISSING ETERNALS. REPAIR THE DAMAGE THAT SPRITE CAUSED.
PROTECT.
PRESERVE.
REPAIR.


VERY WELL, THEN. PROTECT. PRESERVE. REPAIR.
YOU WERE AN AVENGER ONCE, SERSI.
THAT WAS SOMEONE ELSE, A LONG TIME AGO. THEY SAID I'D REMEMBER, BUT I DON'T REMEMBER. ALL I KNOW IS THE MAN I...I REALLY LIKED... IS NOW SOMEONE ELSE.


AND I CAN CHANGE THINGS INTO OTHER THINGS JUST BY WANTING IT TO HAPPEN.


LOOK! WATER INTO WINE.YOU WANT SOME?


I DON'T DRINK.


I TURNED SOME GARBAGE INTO GOLD. BOUGHT MYSELF A **LOFT.**
I'M GOING TO THROW **PARTIES.** MAYBE I'LL MEET SOME GUY WHO **WON'T** THINK HE'S GOD AND RUN AWAY.

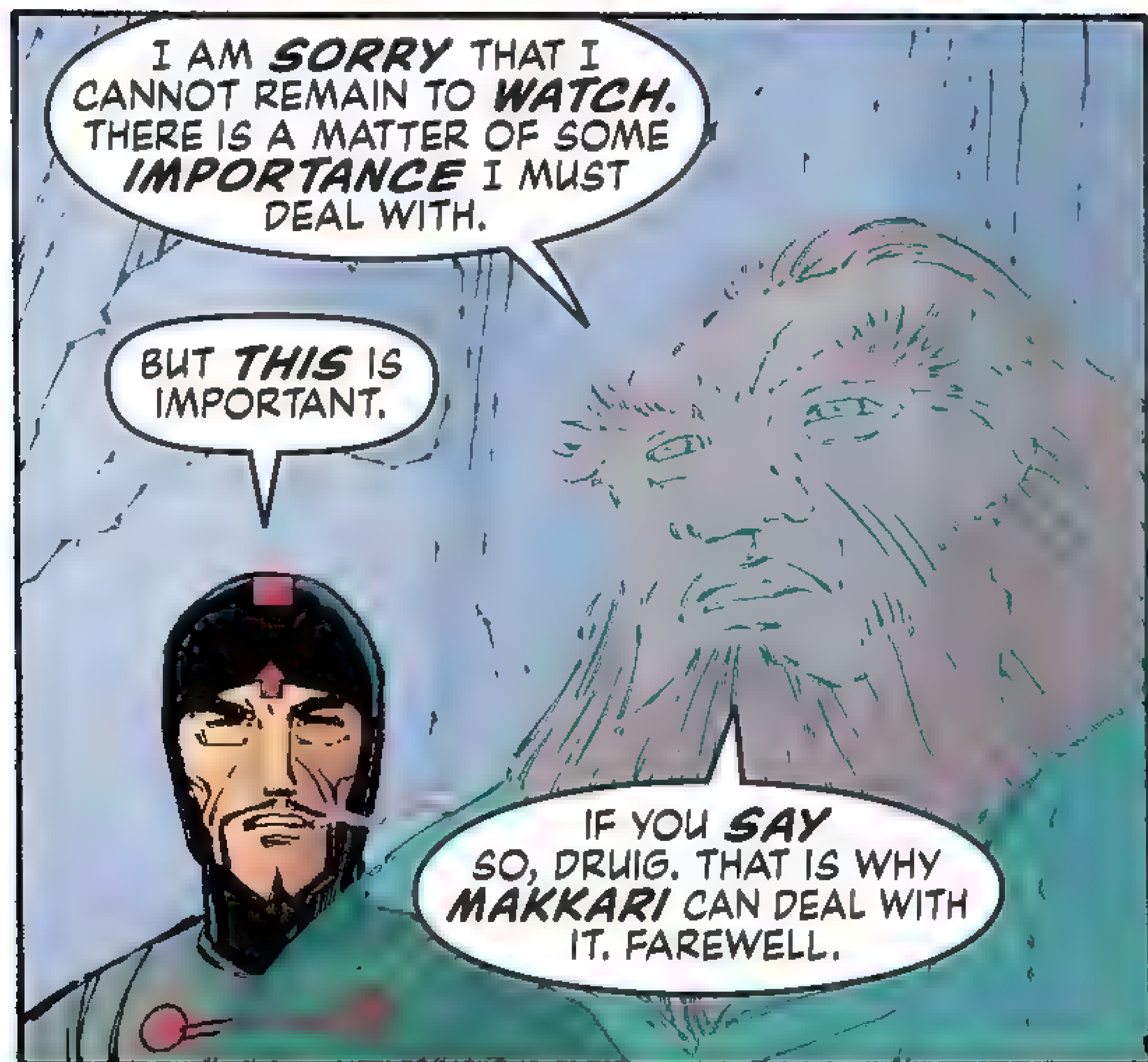

YOU WERE AN **AVENGER,** SERSI. YOU FOUGHT **EVIL.** YOU DID THE **RIGHT** THING. **COME BACK.**

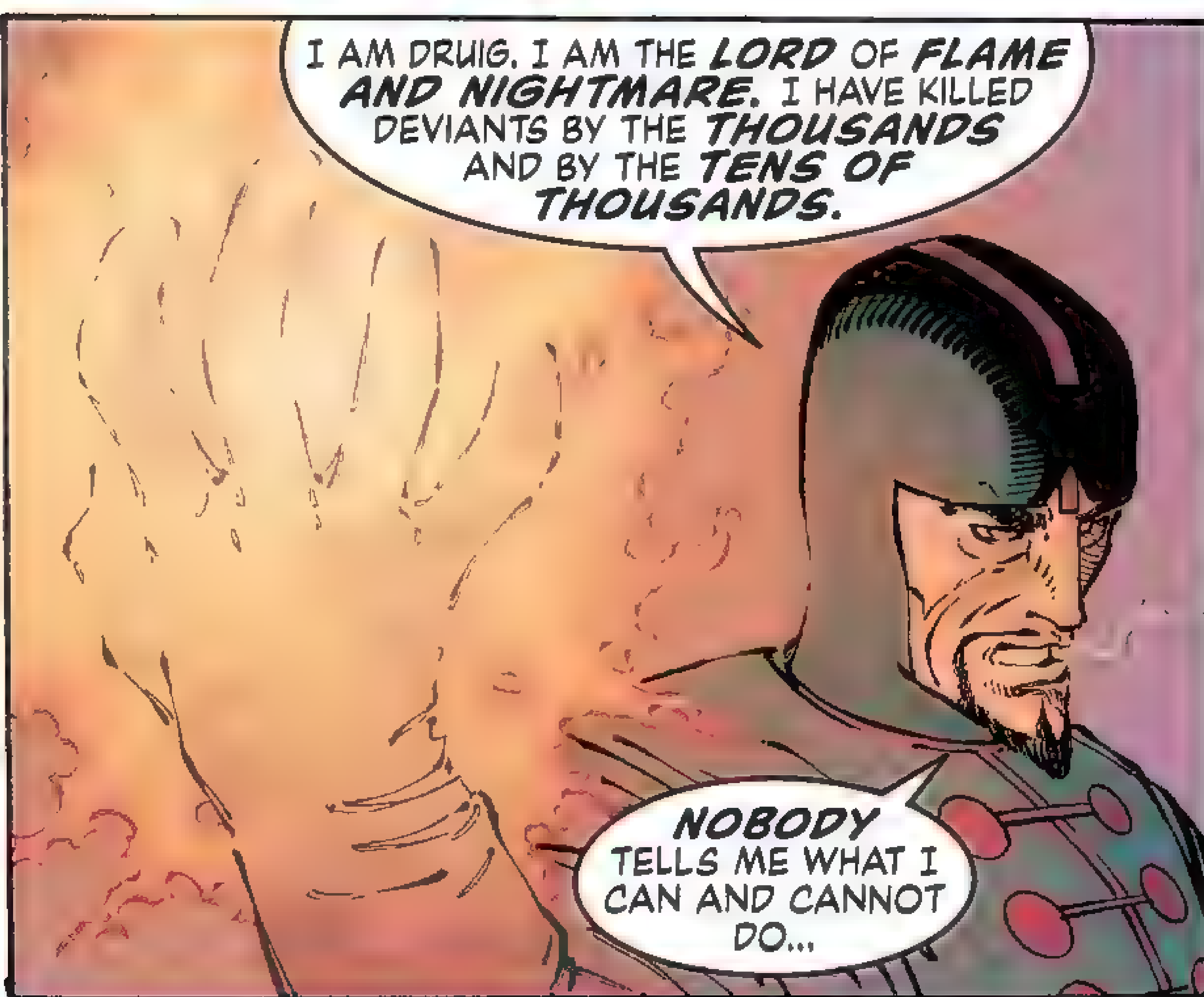

I...DON'T REMEMBER.


I SHOULDN'T HAVE COME HERE.
I'M SORRY.


NOT A PROBLEM.
I CAN WAIT.


ZURAS. DO I HAVE YOUR PERMISSION TO DEAL WITH THIS MATTER?
OF COURSE, MAKKARI. DEAL WITH IT HOWEVER YOU WISH.

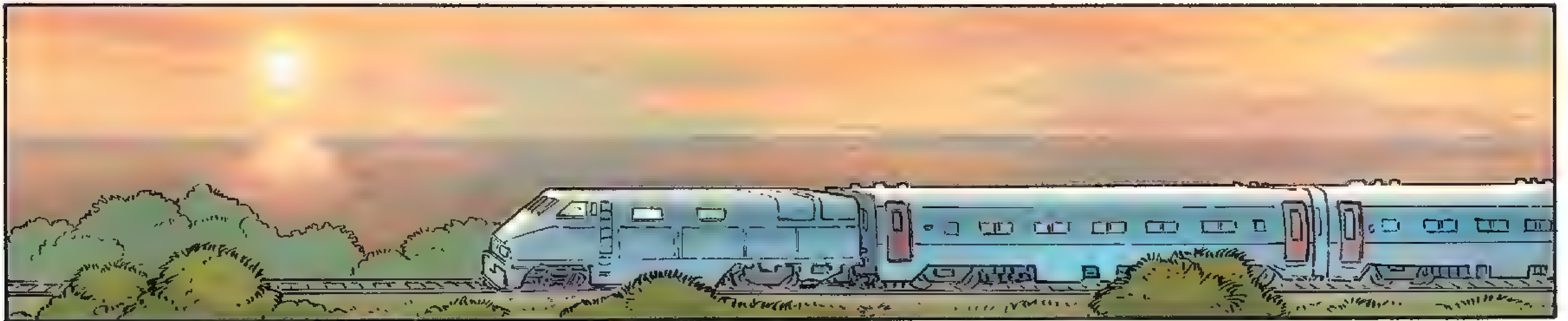

I AM SORRY THAT I CANNOT REMAIN TO WATCH. THERE IS A MATTER OF SOME IMPORTANCE I MUST DEAL WITH.
BUT THIS IS IMPORTANT.
IF YOU SAY SO, DRUIG. THAT IS WHY MAKKARI CAN DEAL WITH IT. FAREWELL.


I AM DRUIG. I AM THE LORD OF FLAME AND NIGHTMARE. I HAVE KILLED DEVIANTS BY THE THOUSANDS AND BY THE TENS OF THOUSANDS.
NOBODY TELLS ME WHAT I CAN AND CANNOT DO...

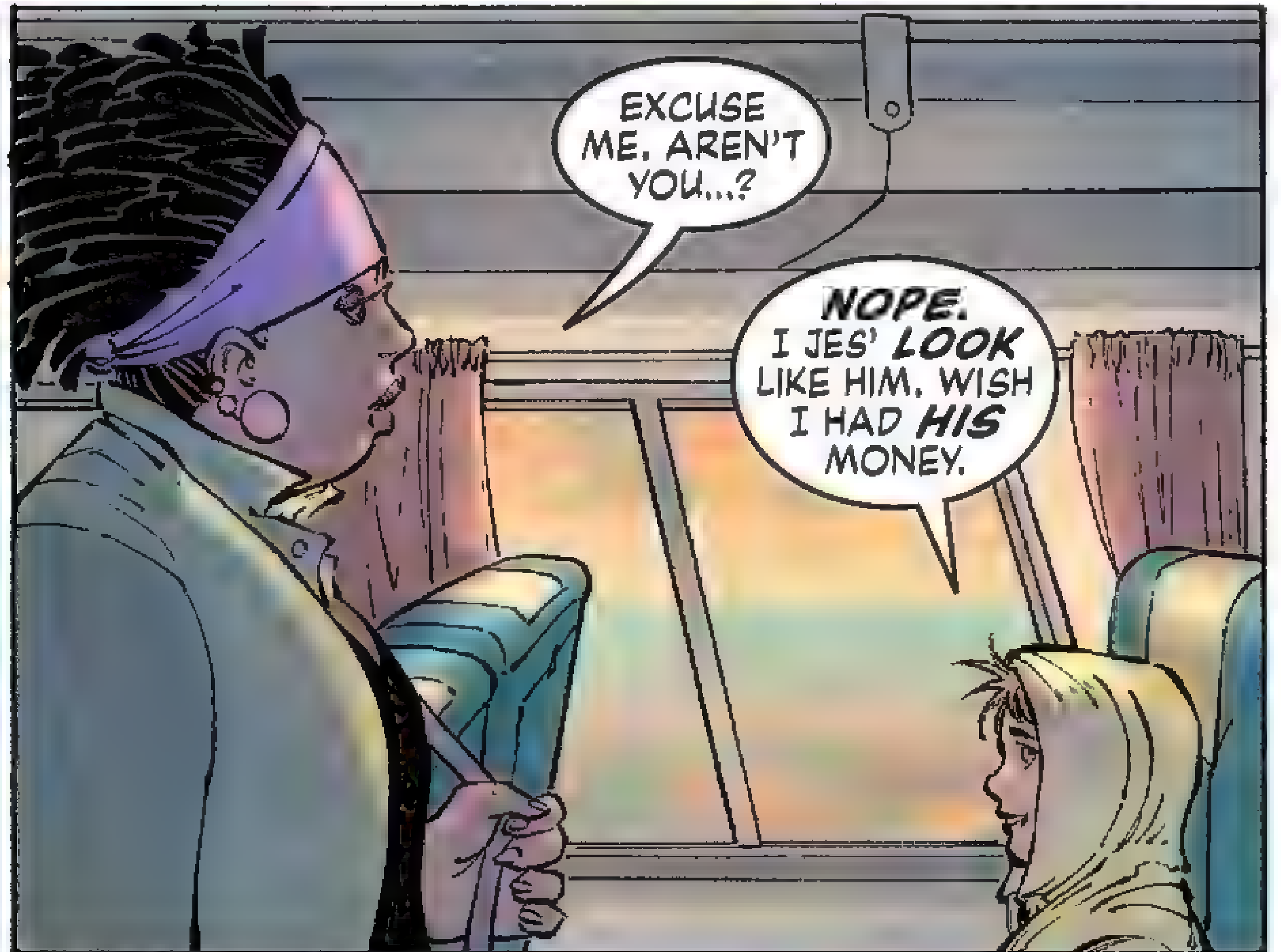
LET'S DEAL WITH THIS EFFICIENTLY...
DRUIG! ANGER THEM AND THEY'LL ATTACK...!

TOO LATE, MAKKARI.
DRUIG JUST **KICKED** A HORNET'S NEST...
THEIR WEAPONS ARE TOO HOT TO HOLD...
...THAT SHOULD SLOW THEM DOWN.


Shall I give the order to commence the battle, great Kra?
Do NOTHING, Ghiough. Nothing at all. Not YET...
I want to watch what Makkari does.



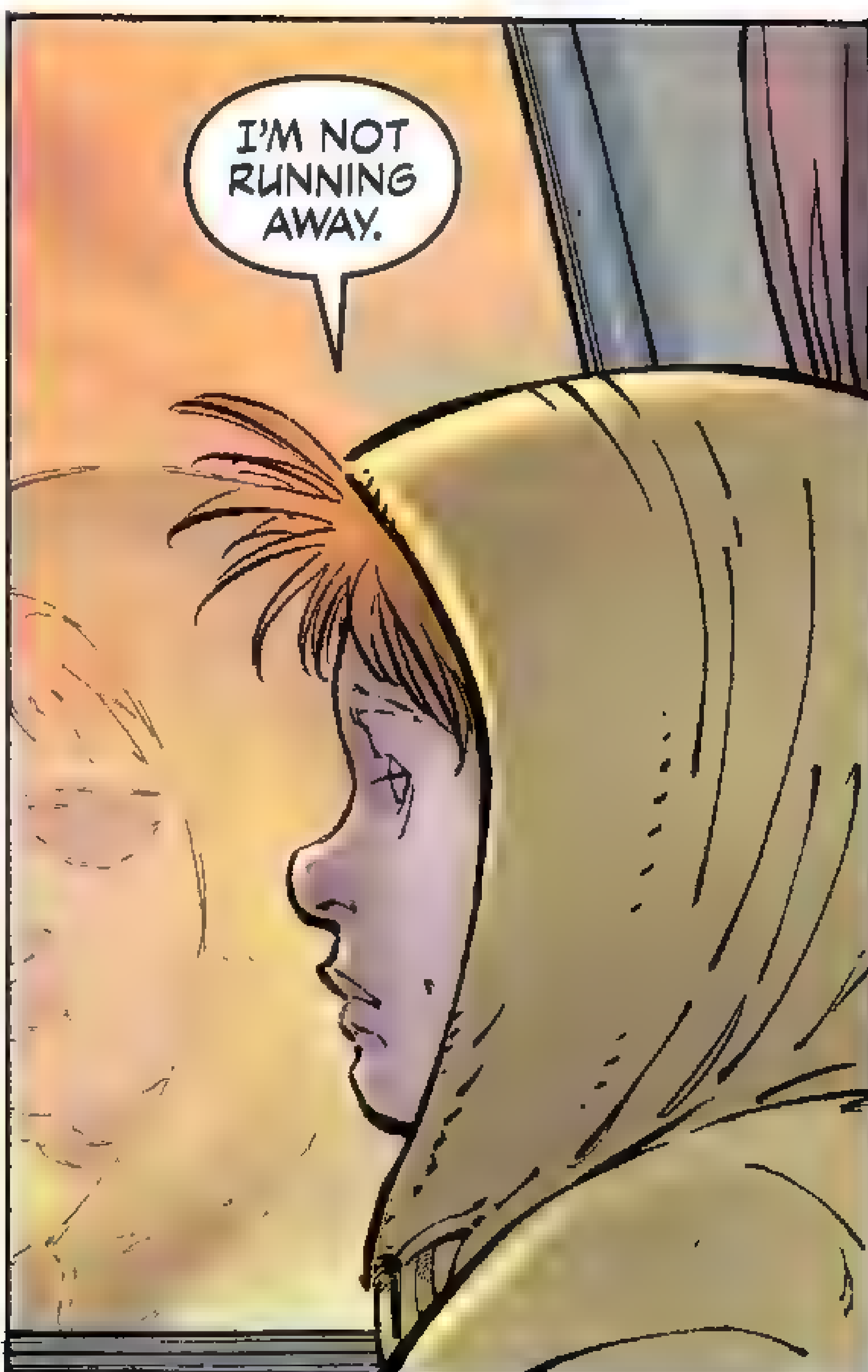



EXCUSE ME. AREN'T YOU...?
NOPE. I JES' LOOK LIKE HIM. WISH I HAD HIS MONEY.


ME TOO. YOU TRAVELLIN' ALONE?
I'M GOIN' TO LOS ANGELES TO SEE MY DAD. HE'S GOING TO BE WAITING FOR ME. HE AND MY MOM ARE DIVORCED. SHE HATES MY DAD'S NEW BOY-FRIEND.



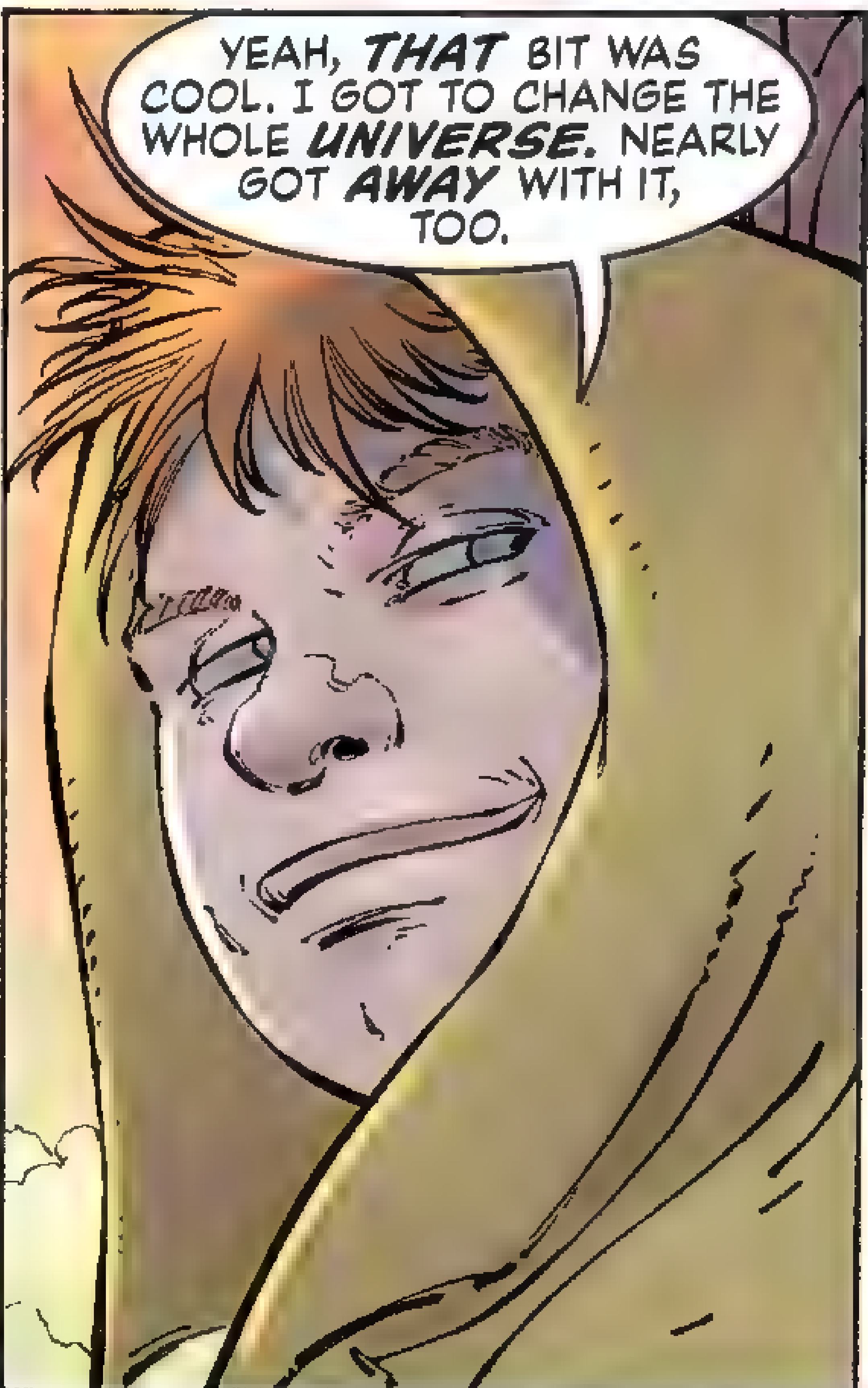



IT'S HARD TO BE A KID ON THE RUN, ISN'T IT, SPRITE? PEOPLE WANT TO HELP A KID TRAVELLING ALONE.

I'M NOT RUNNING AWAY.

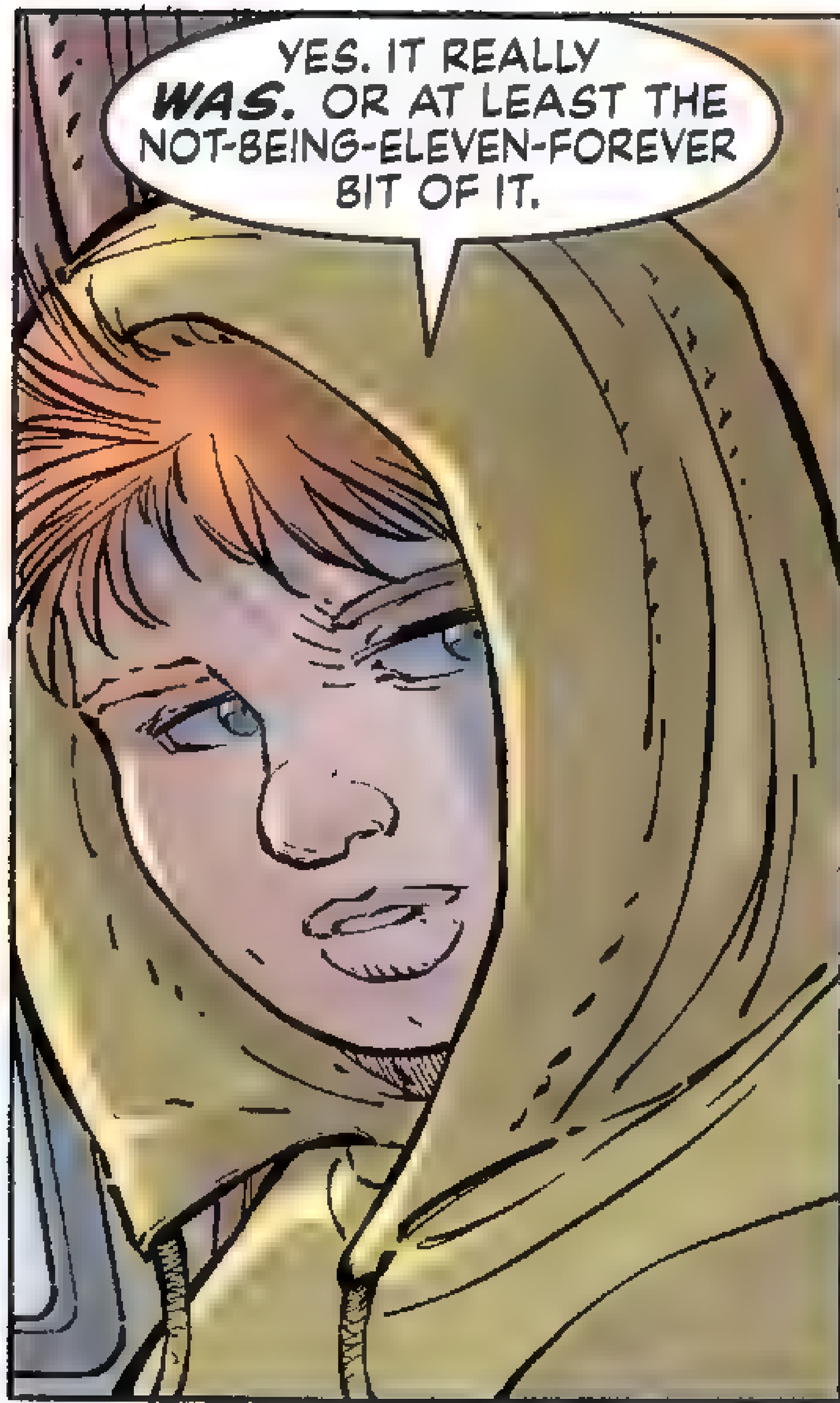
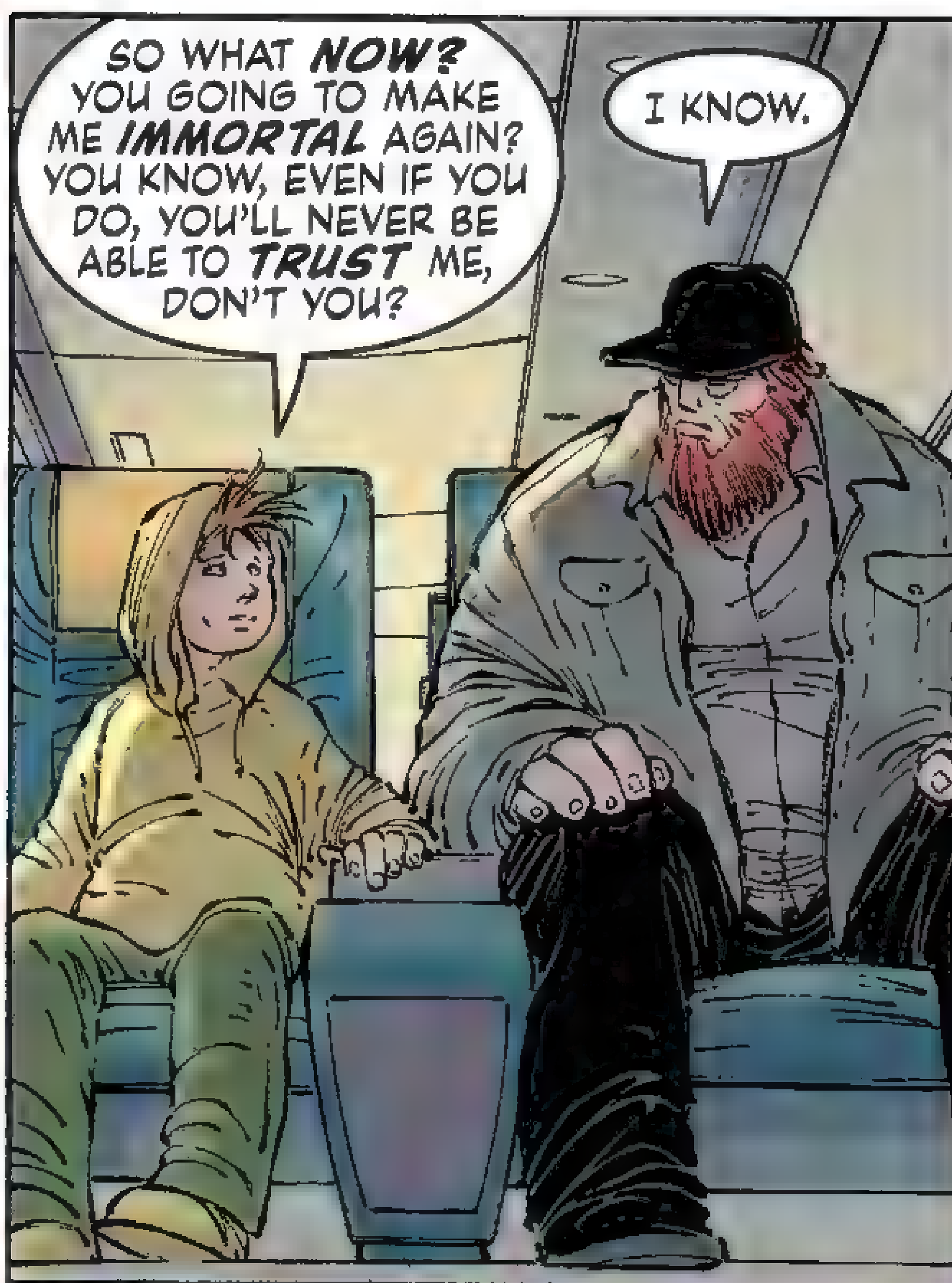
SPRITE. WON'T YOU LOOK AT ME?

I'M ONLY HUMAN NOW, BUT DON'T THINK YOU CAN CONTR--

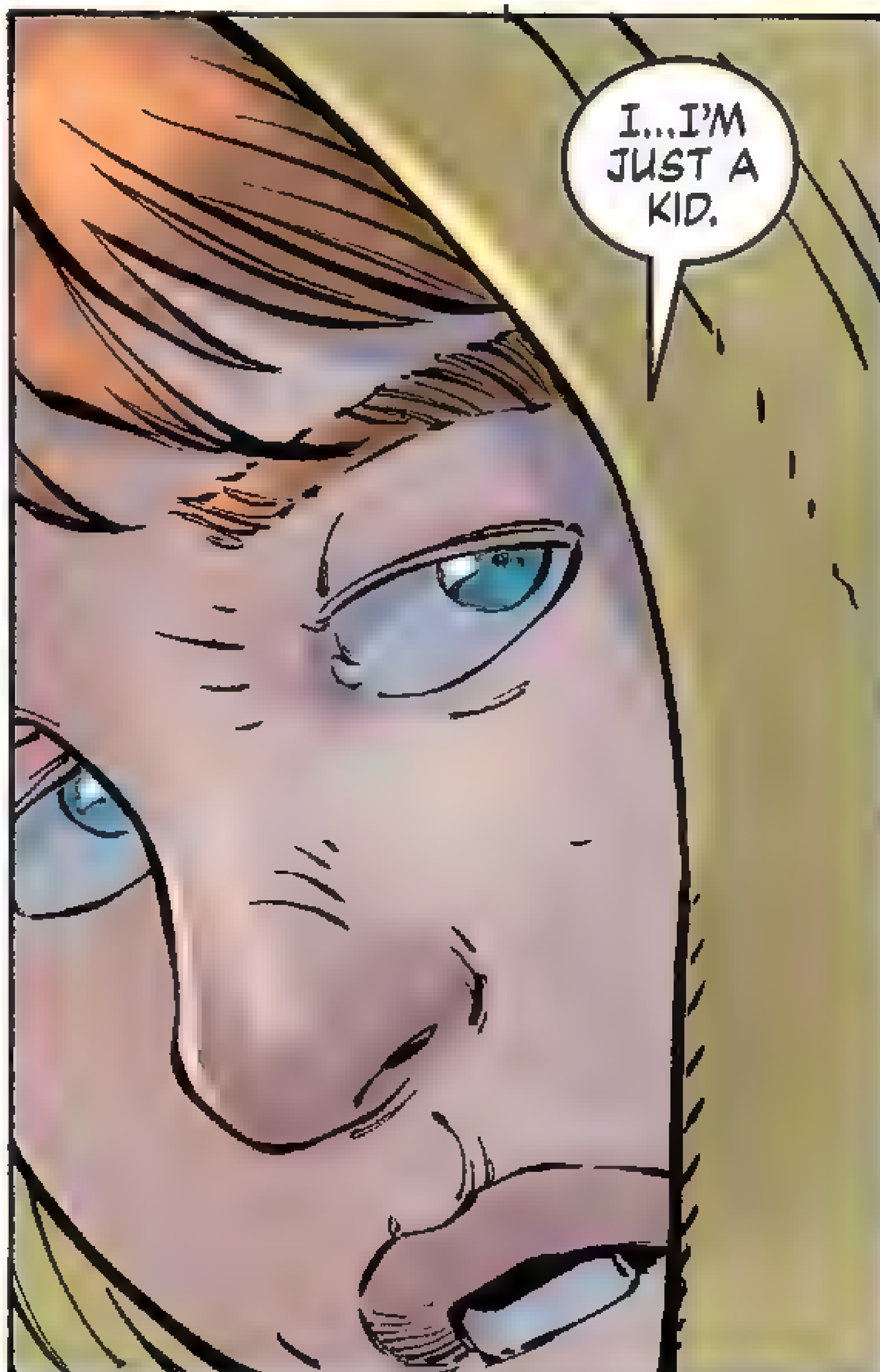
I WOULD NOT TRY TO CONTROL YOUR MIND.
THANK YOU.


YOU DESTROYED THE ETERNALS, SPRITE. YOU NEARLY DESTROYED THE WORLD.

YEAH, THAT BIT WAS COOL. I GOT TO CHANGE THE WHOLE UNIVERSE. NEARLY GOT AWAY WITH IT, TOO.

WAS MORTALITY SO ATTRACTIVE, SPRITE?

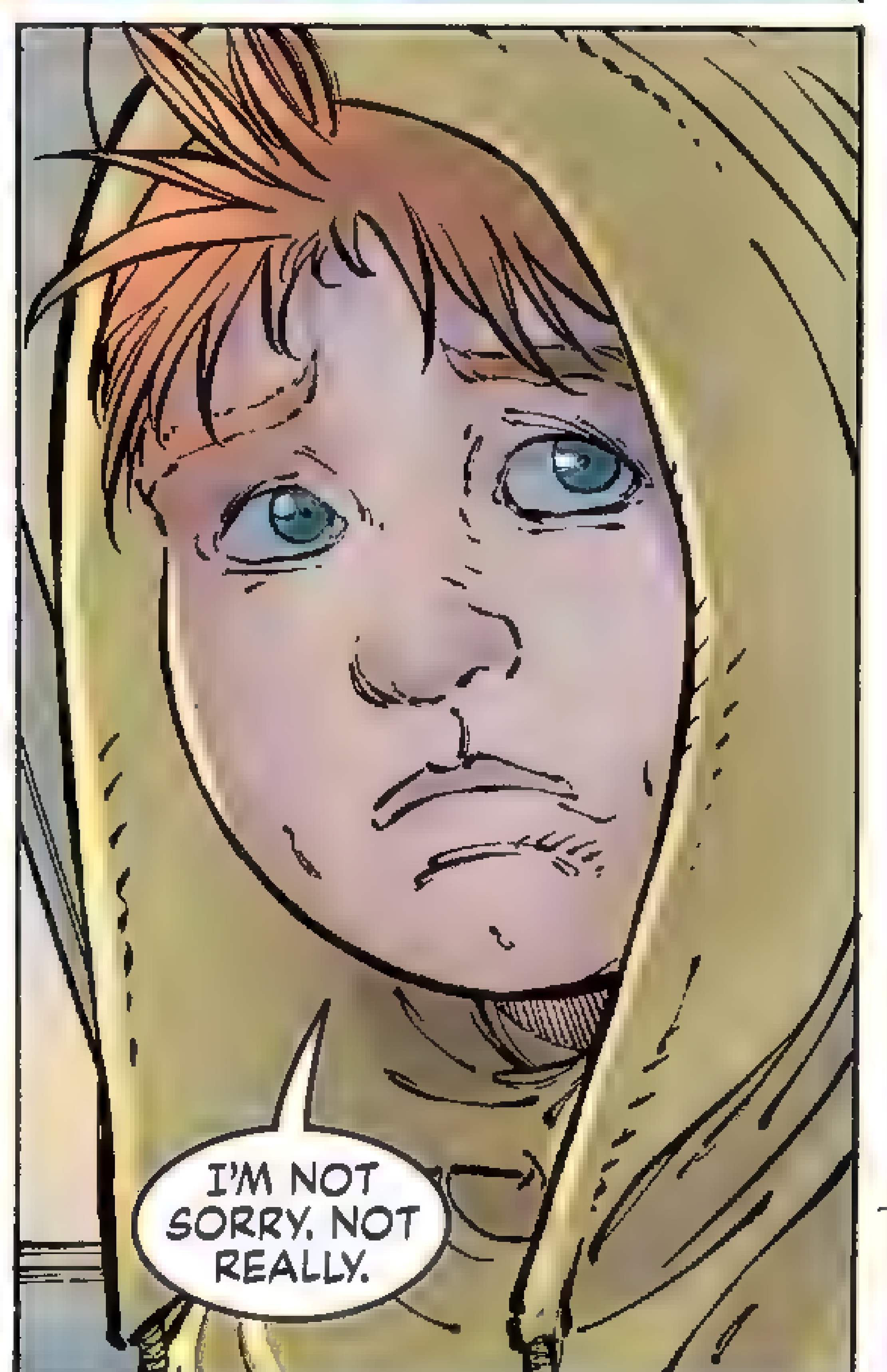

YES. IT REALLY WAS. OR AT LEAST THE NOT-BEING-ELEVEN-FOREVER BIT OF IT.

SO WHAT NOW? YOU GOING TO MAKE ME IMMORTAL AGAIN? YOU KNOW, EVEN IF YOU DO, YOU'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO TRUST ME, DON'T YOU?
I KNOW.

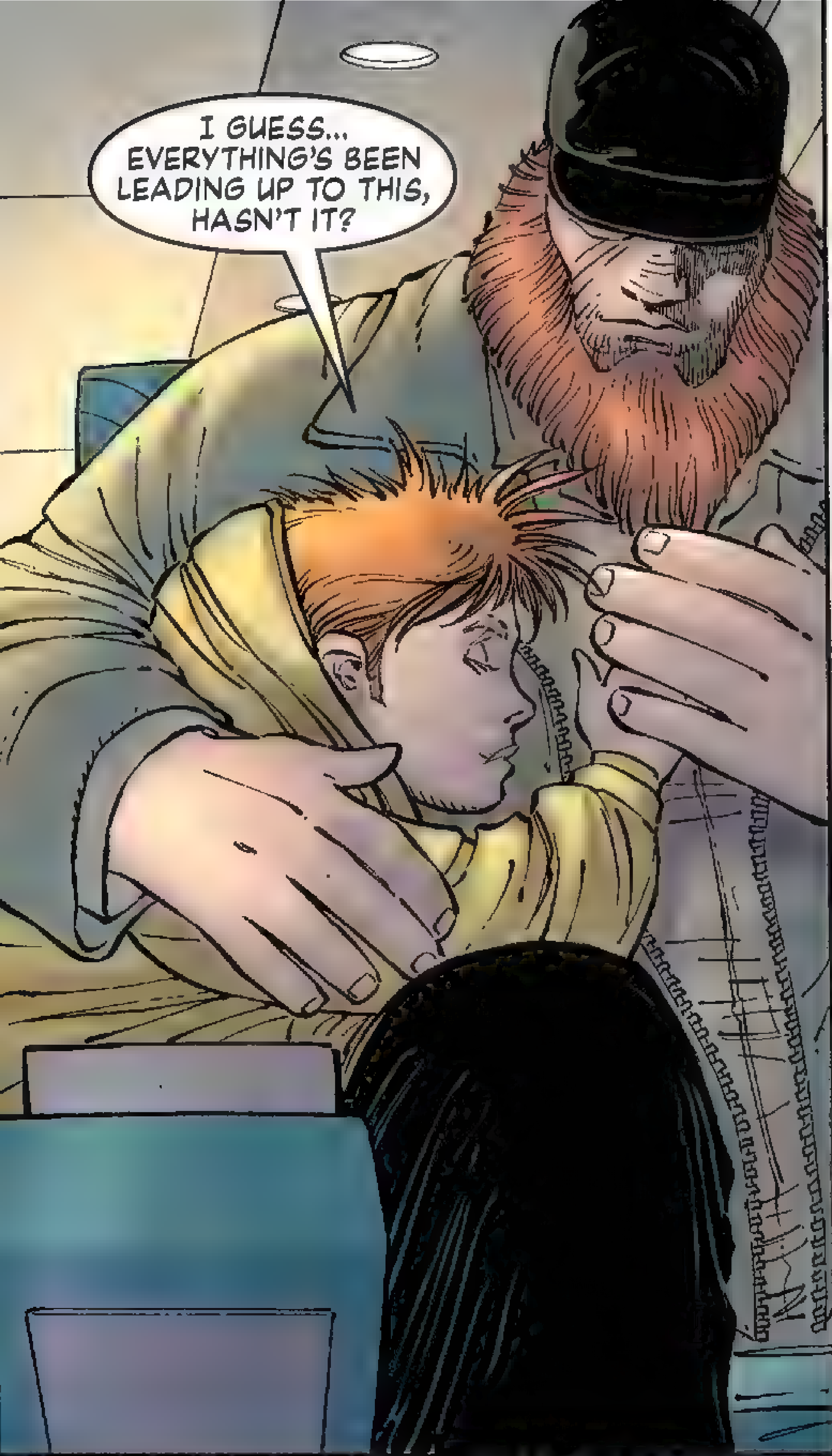
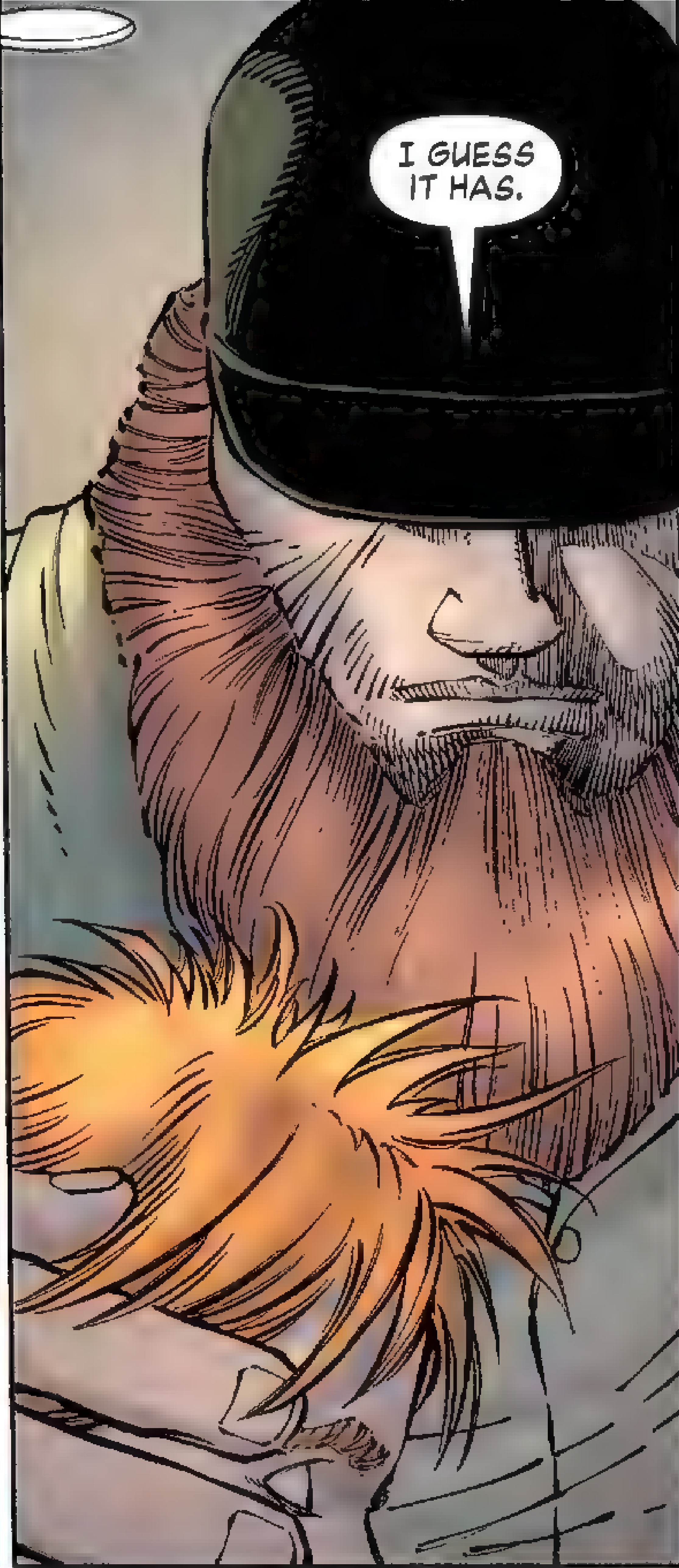
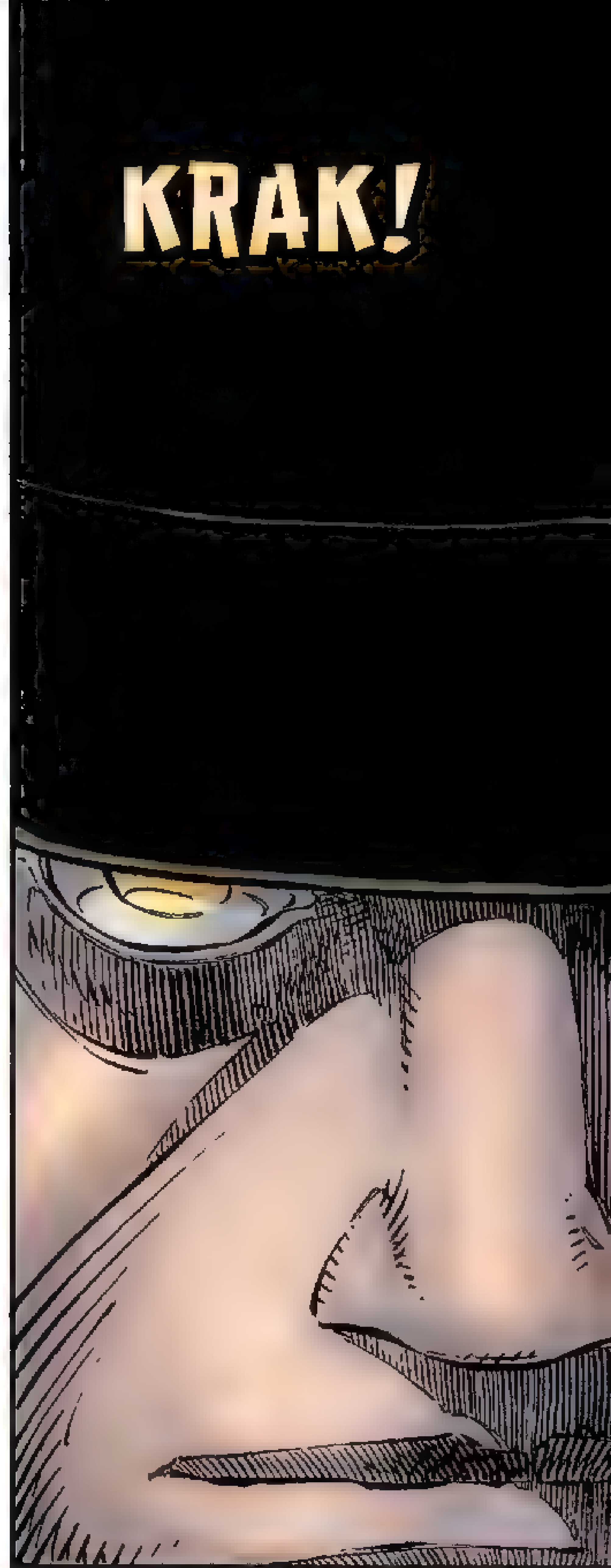
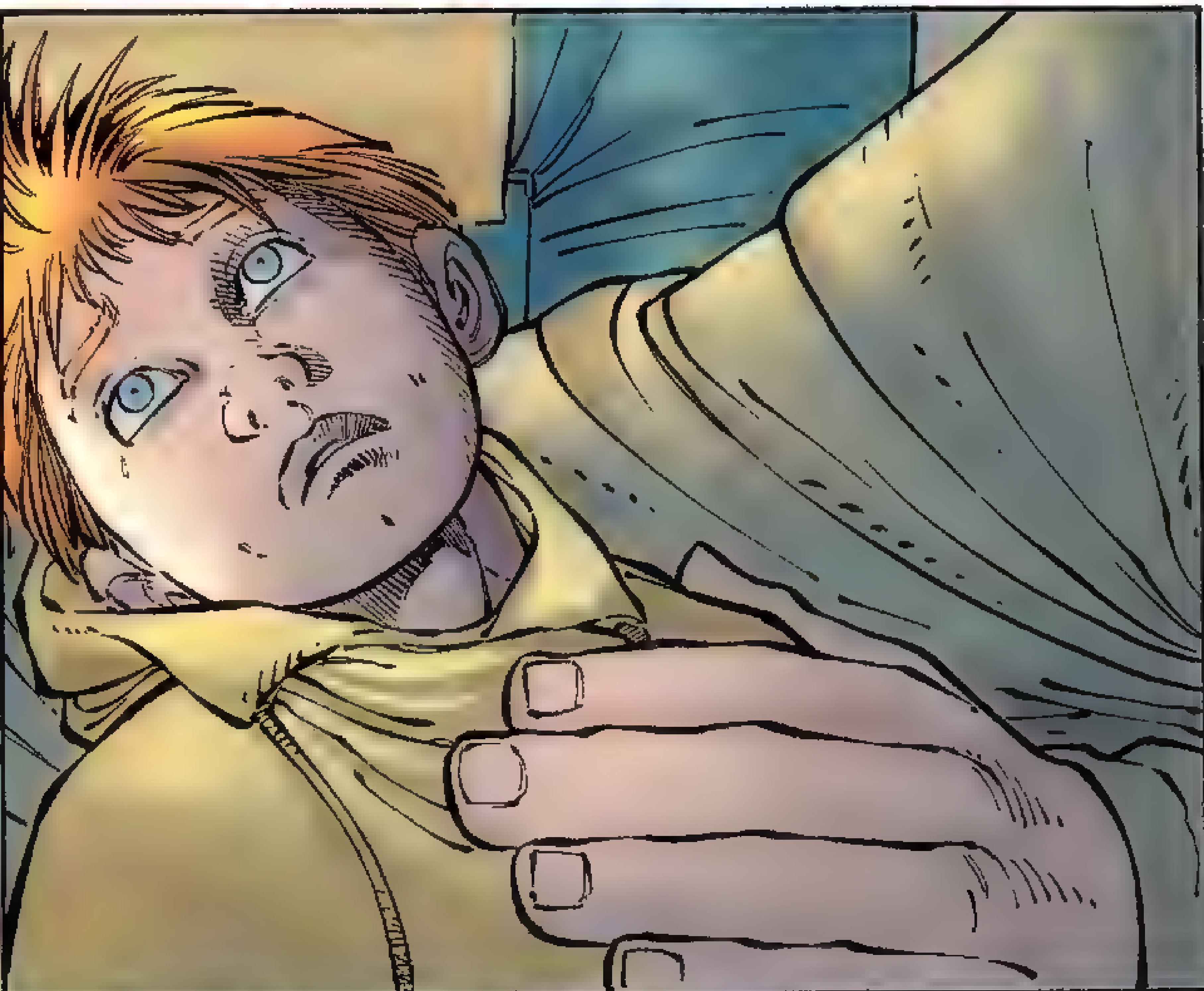
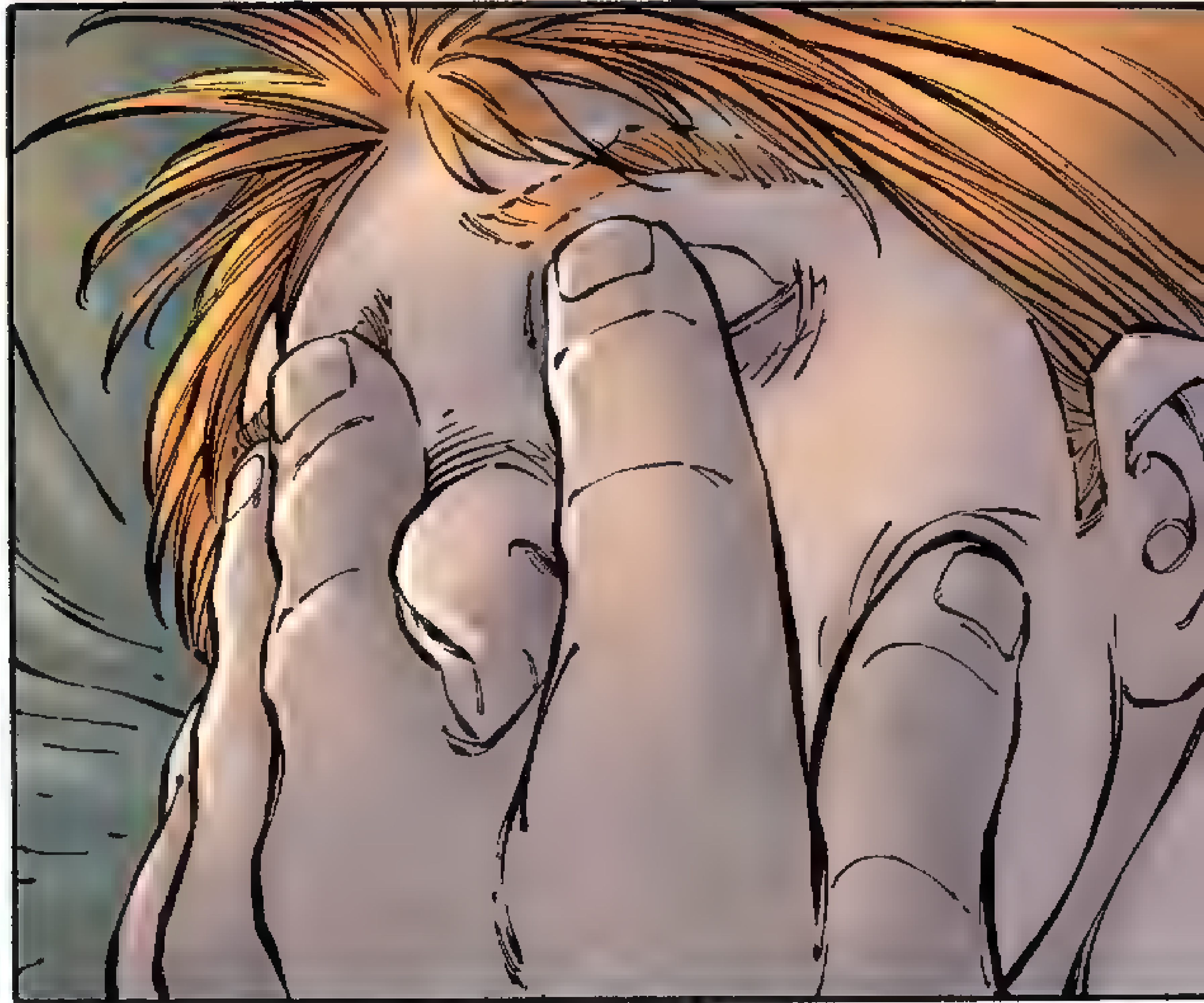
IT WAS GOOD TO BE MORTAL. IT ROCKED.
SO. DO WE RIDE THE NEXT TRAIN TO OLYMPIA?

NO, SPRITE.

I...I'M JUST A KID.

YOU HAVEN'T BEEN A KID FOR A MILLION YEARS.

GET AWAY FROM ME. GET AWAY RIGHT NOW OR I'LL TELL THEM THAT YOU--YOU TRIED TO TOUCH ME...

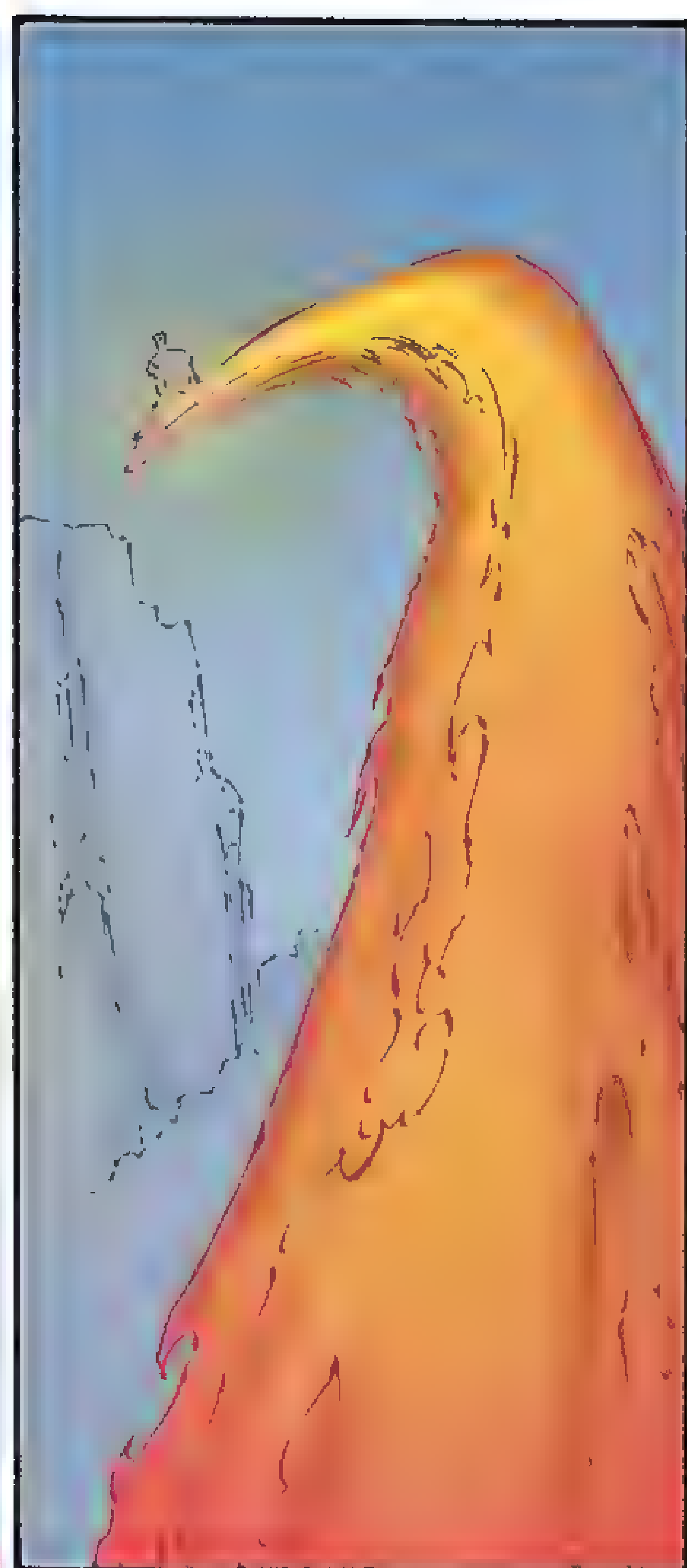
SPRITE. I ALWAYS ENJOYED HAVING YOU AROUND. YOU WERE SMART, FUNNY, AND UN-PREDICTABLE.
BUT JOURNEYS END...
...AND WE'RE COMING TO THE END OF THE LINE.

I'M NOT SORRY. NOT REALLY.

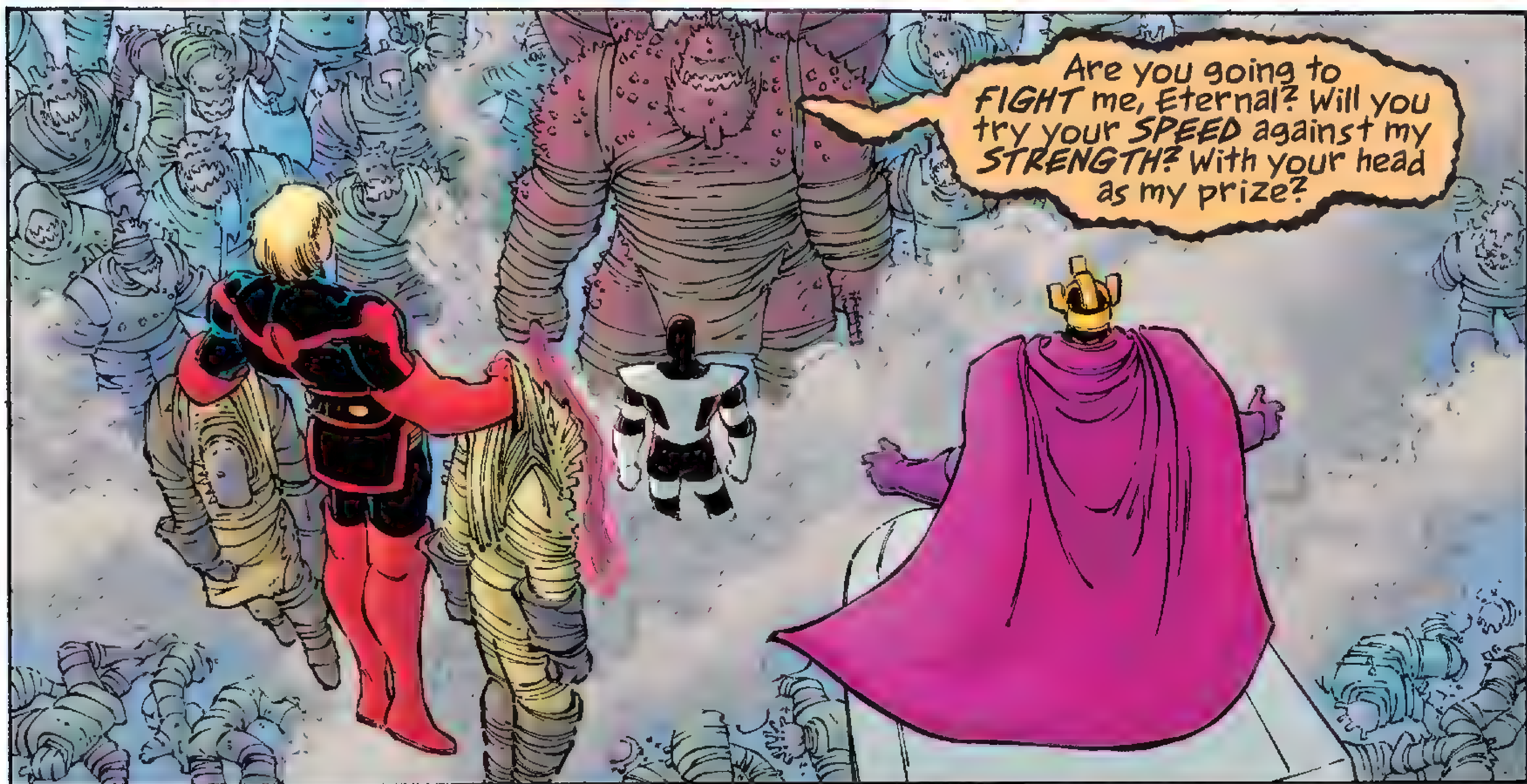

I GUESS... EVERYTHING'S BEEN LEADING UP TO THIS, HASN'T IT?

I GUESS IT HAS.

KRAK!



THIS IS LOS ANGELES UNION STATION, WHERE THIS TRAIN WILL TERMINATE.
PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU DON'T LEAVE ANYTHING BEHIND.

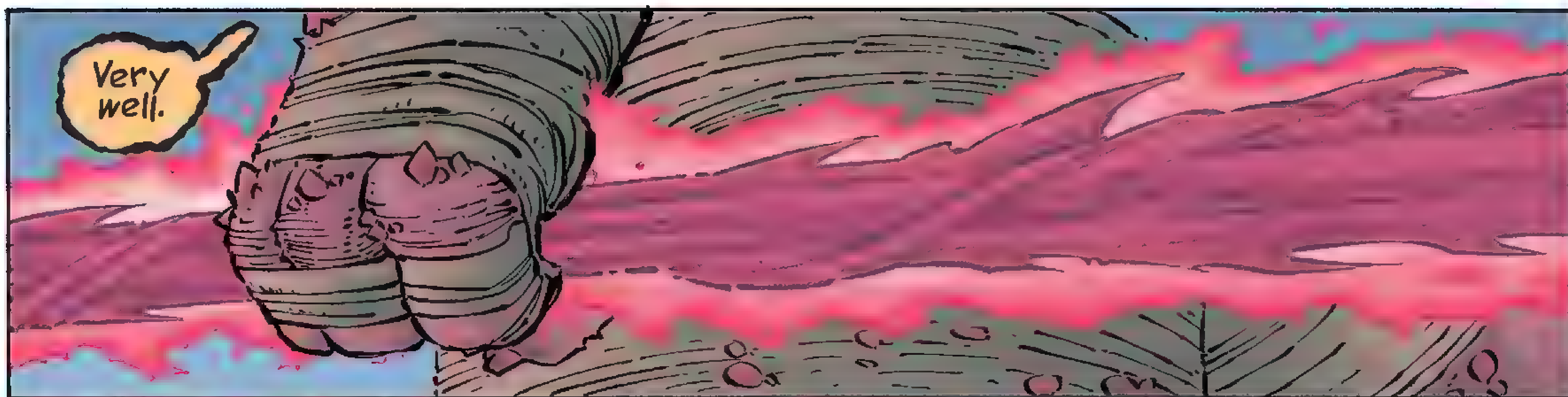

LEAVE THEM! LEAVE THEM ALONE! I WILL DO THIS MY WAY, DRUIG.

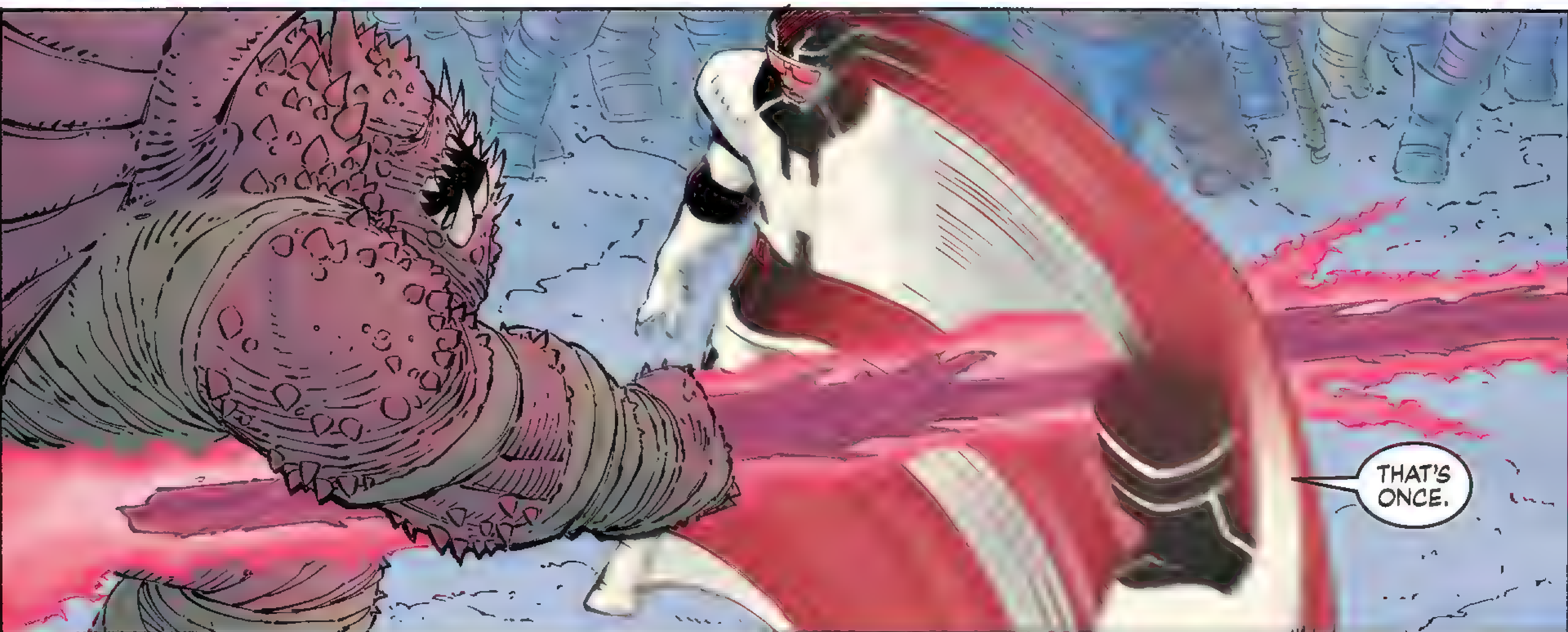

YOU ARE A WEAKLING, AND A CRETIN.
BUT YOU'LL LEARN YOUR LESSON SOON ENOUGH, MAKKARI.



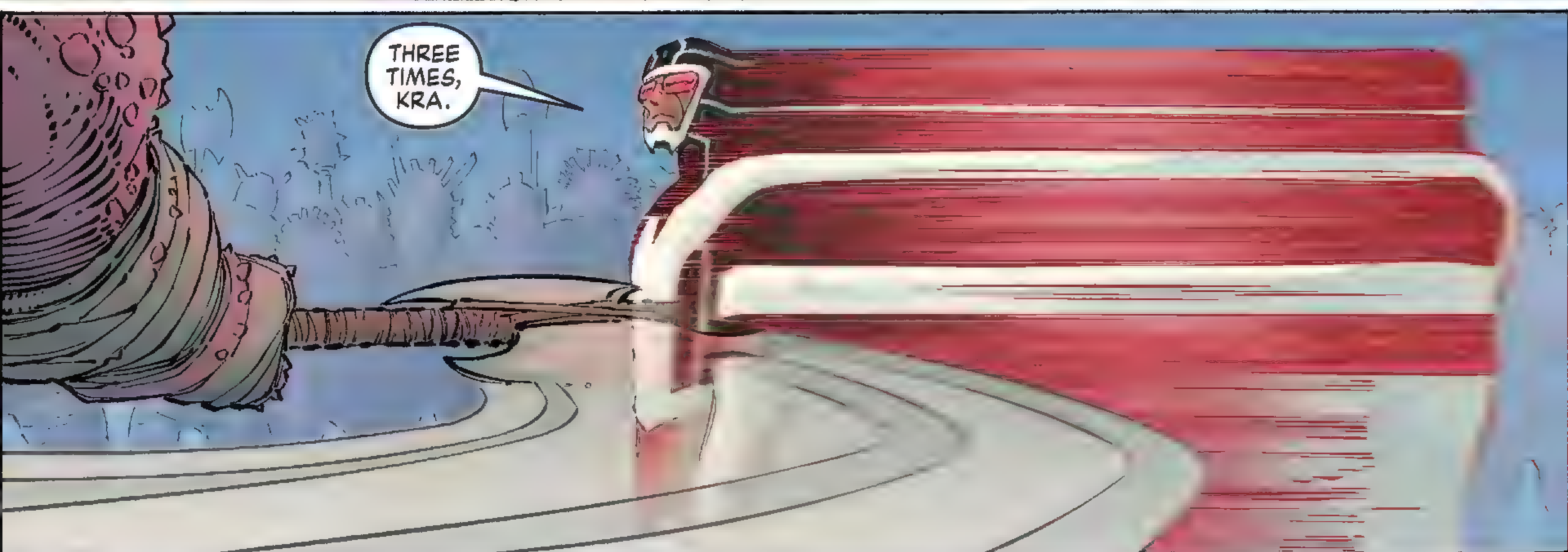

Are you going to FIGHT me, Eternal? Will you try your SPEED against my STRENGTH? With your head as my prize?


KRA, I AM ETERNAL. TAKE MY HEAD, AND I WILL STILL COME BACK, STRONGER, FASTER. BUT I WILL ACKNOWLEDGE YOU AS MY MASTER IF YOU CAN DEFEAT ME.
YOU CAN STRIKE ME THREE TIMES, IF I CAN STRIKE YOU ONCE.


Very well.

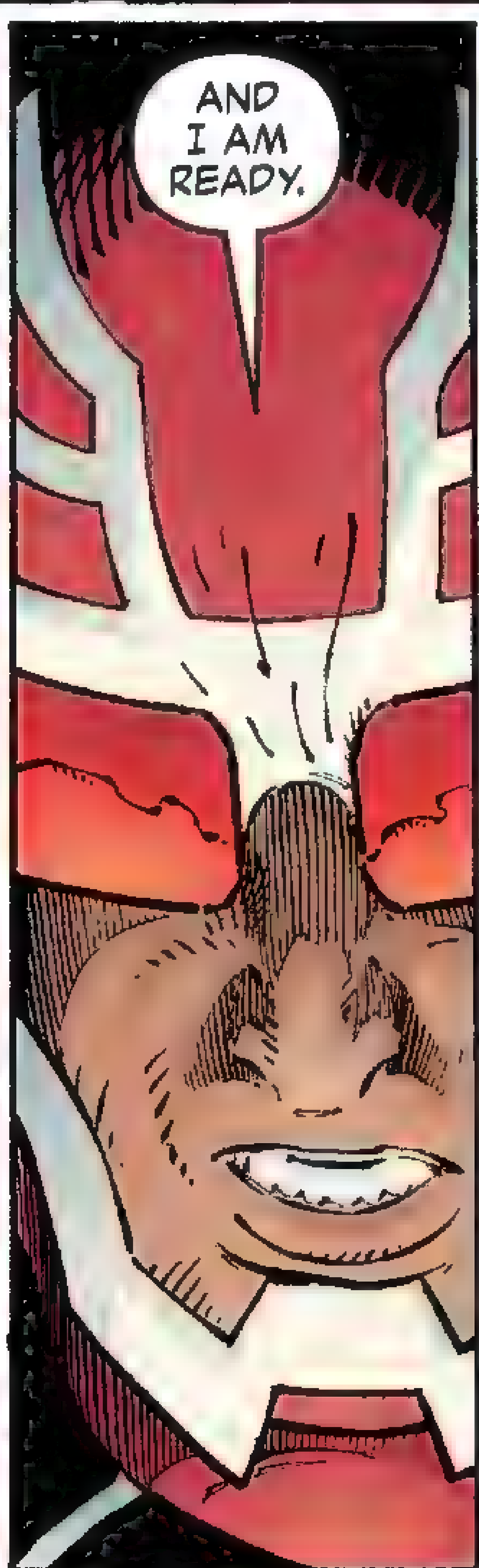

THAT'S ONCE.


THAT'S TWICE.

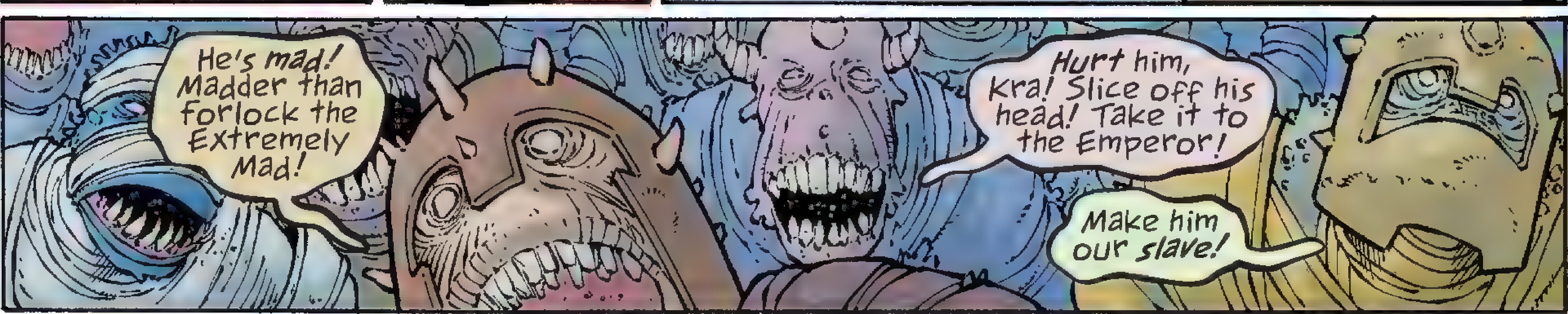

THREE TIMES, KRA.


I struck at you three times, Eternal. Now you may strike once.
But if he hits you at that speed, Great Kra, he will *destroy* you.

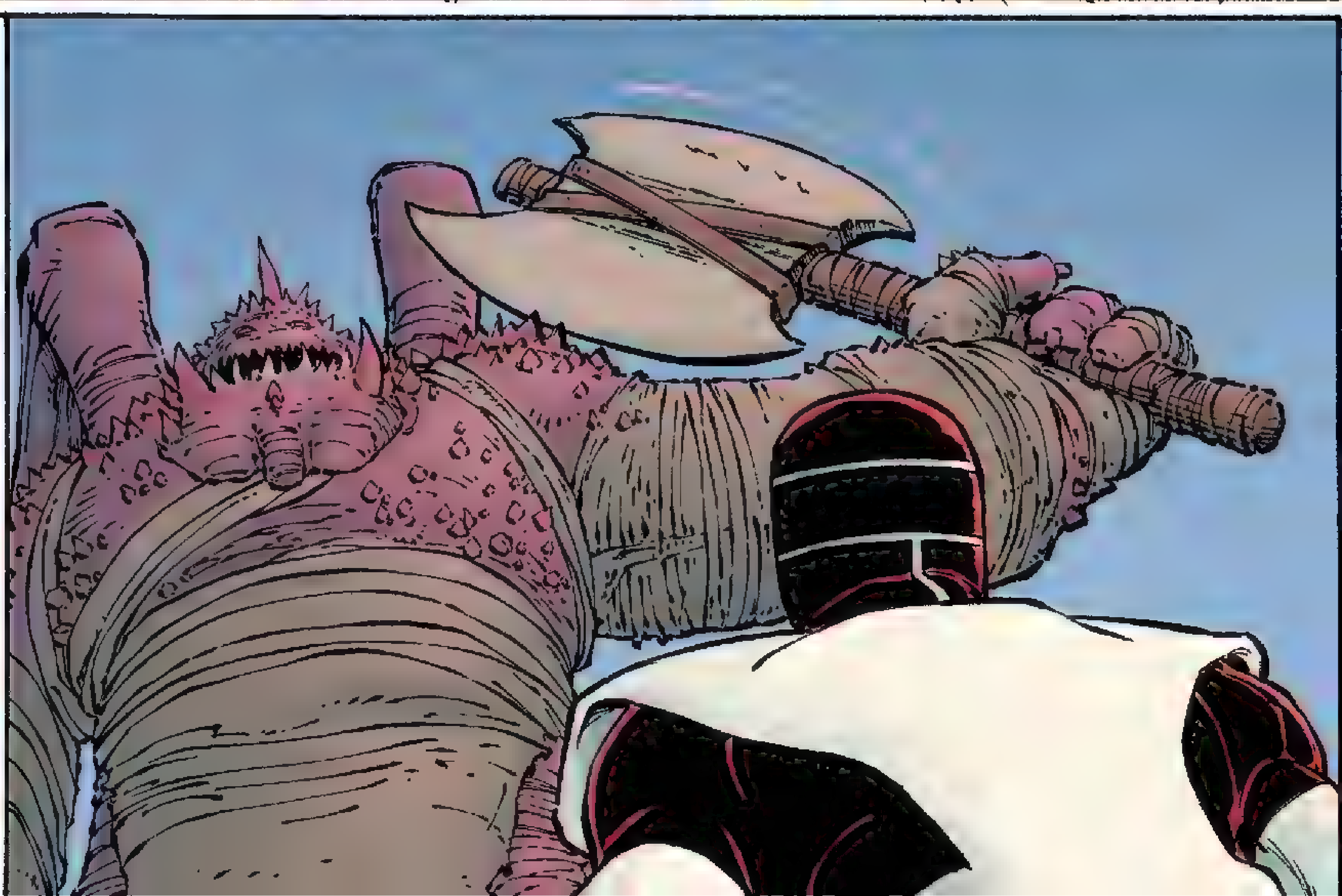

SILENCE. Would you have me break the word of Kra?
I AM READY.


AND I AM READY.


What are you doing?
THIS IS MY BLOW, KRA. TAKE MY HEAD AS YOUR TROPHY.

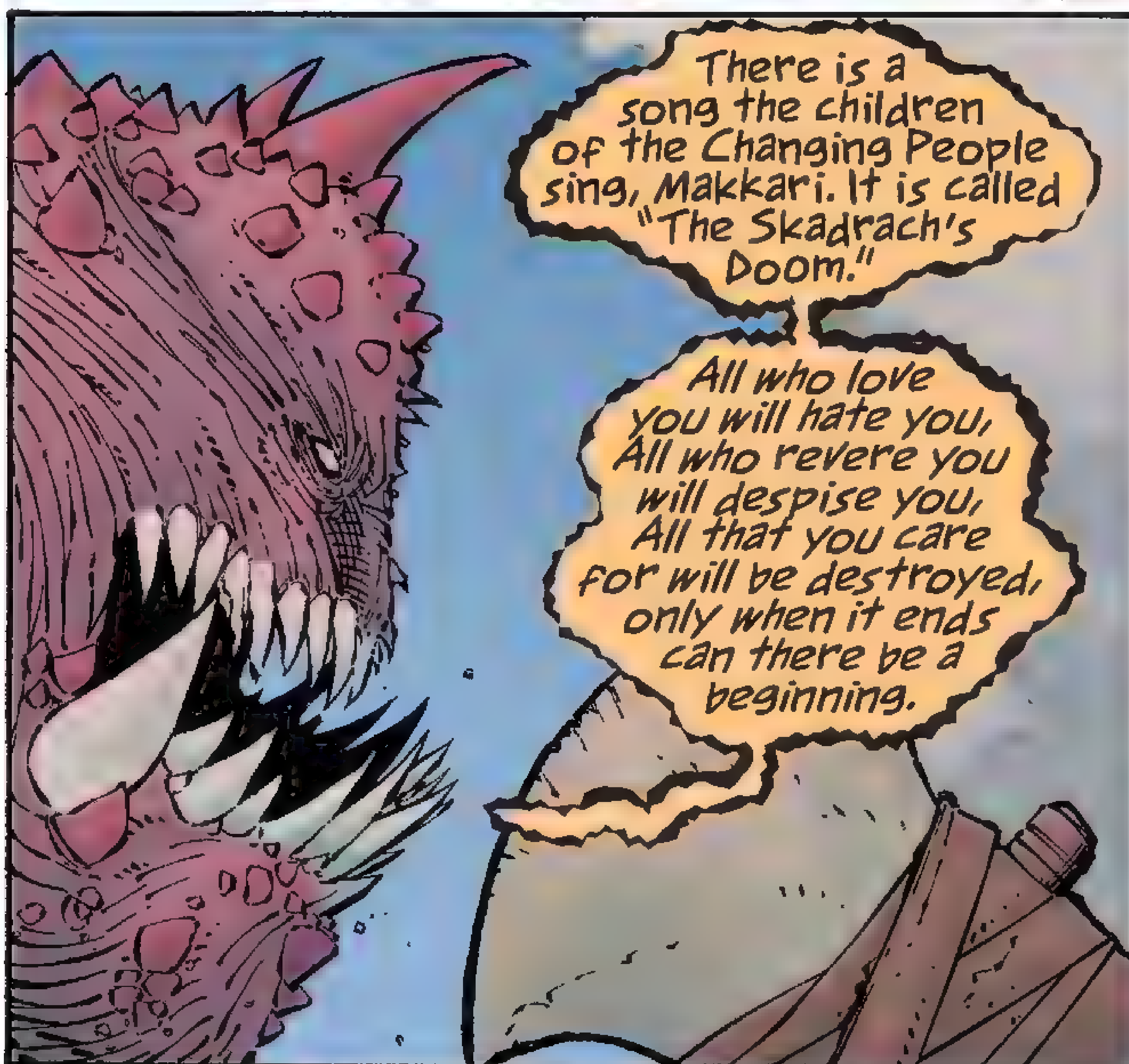

He's *mad!* Madder than Forlock the Extremely Mad!
Hurt him, Kra! Slice off his head! Take it to the Emperor!
Make him our *slave!*


WHAT IN *HADES* DOES HE THINK HE'S DOING?
WAIT.

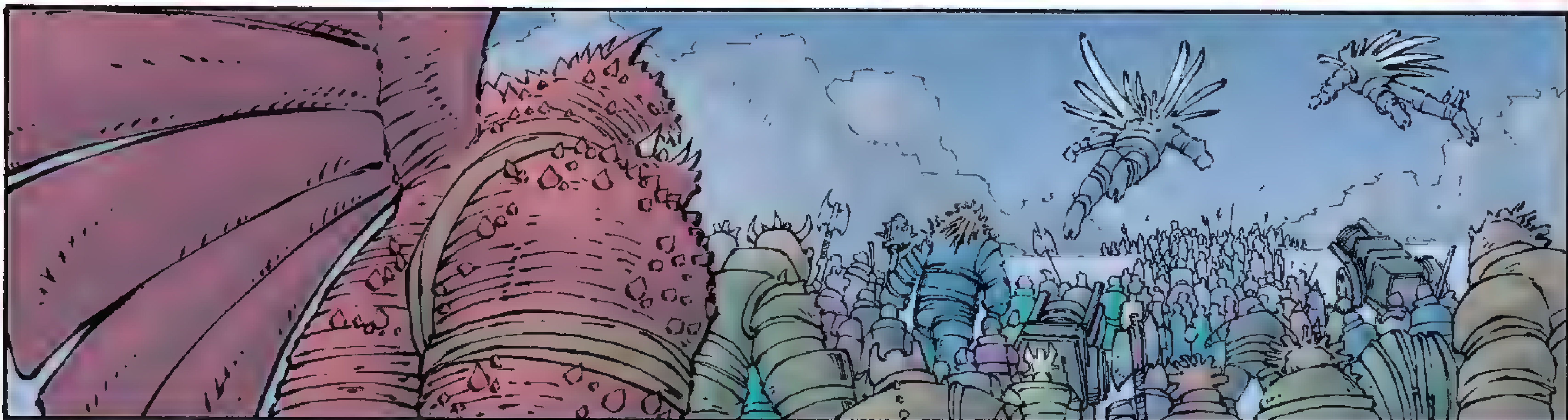



See? It is just as we told you, Kra. He is Skadrach.
I thought you two were MAD, Gelt. But I was WRONG.

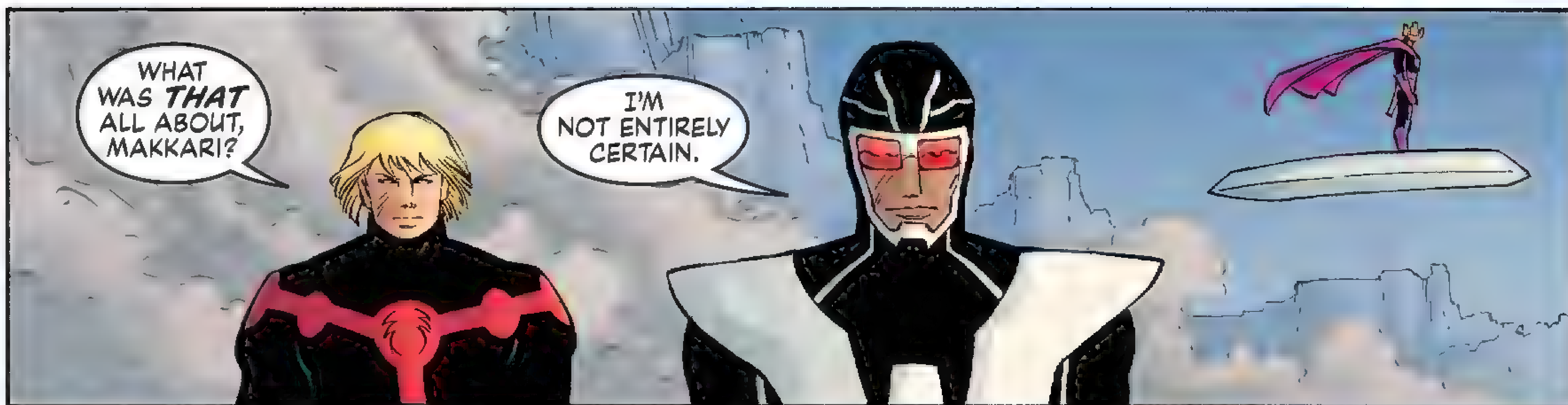
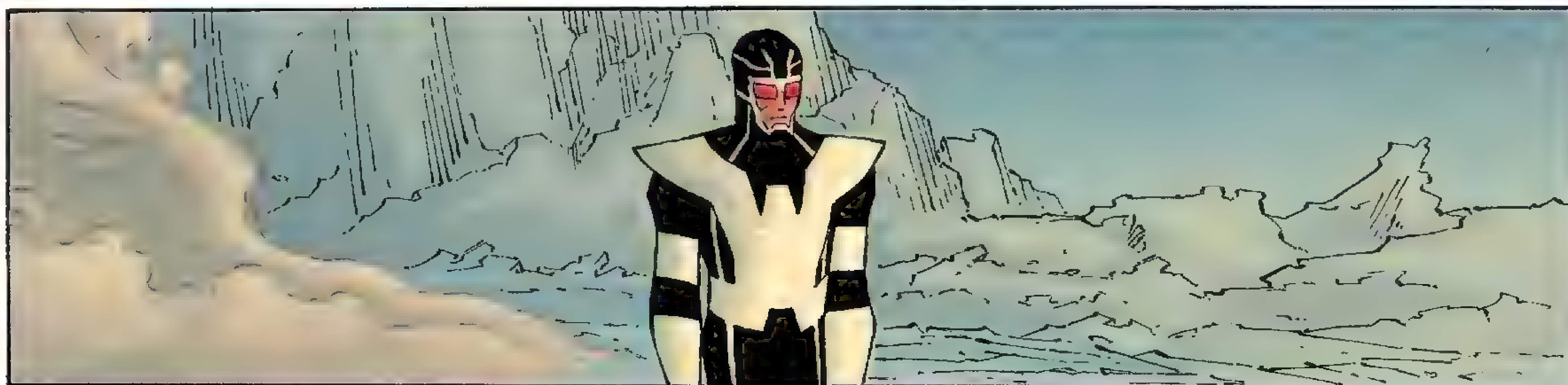
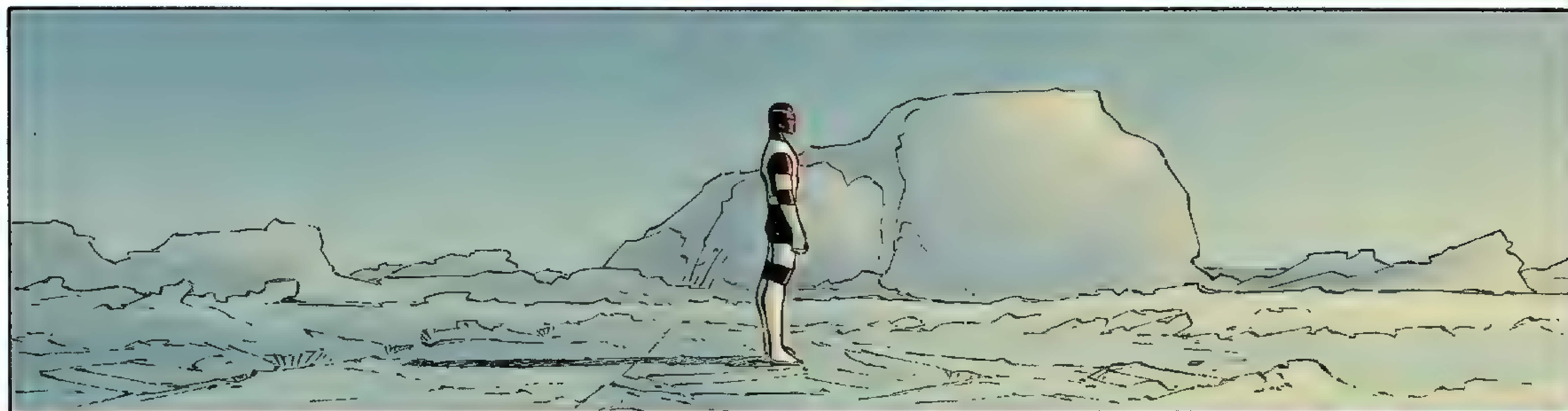
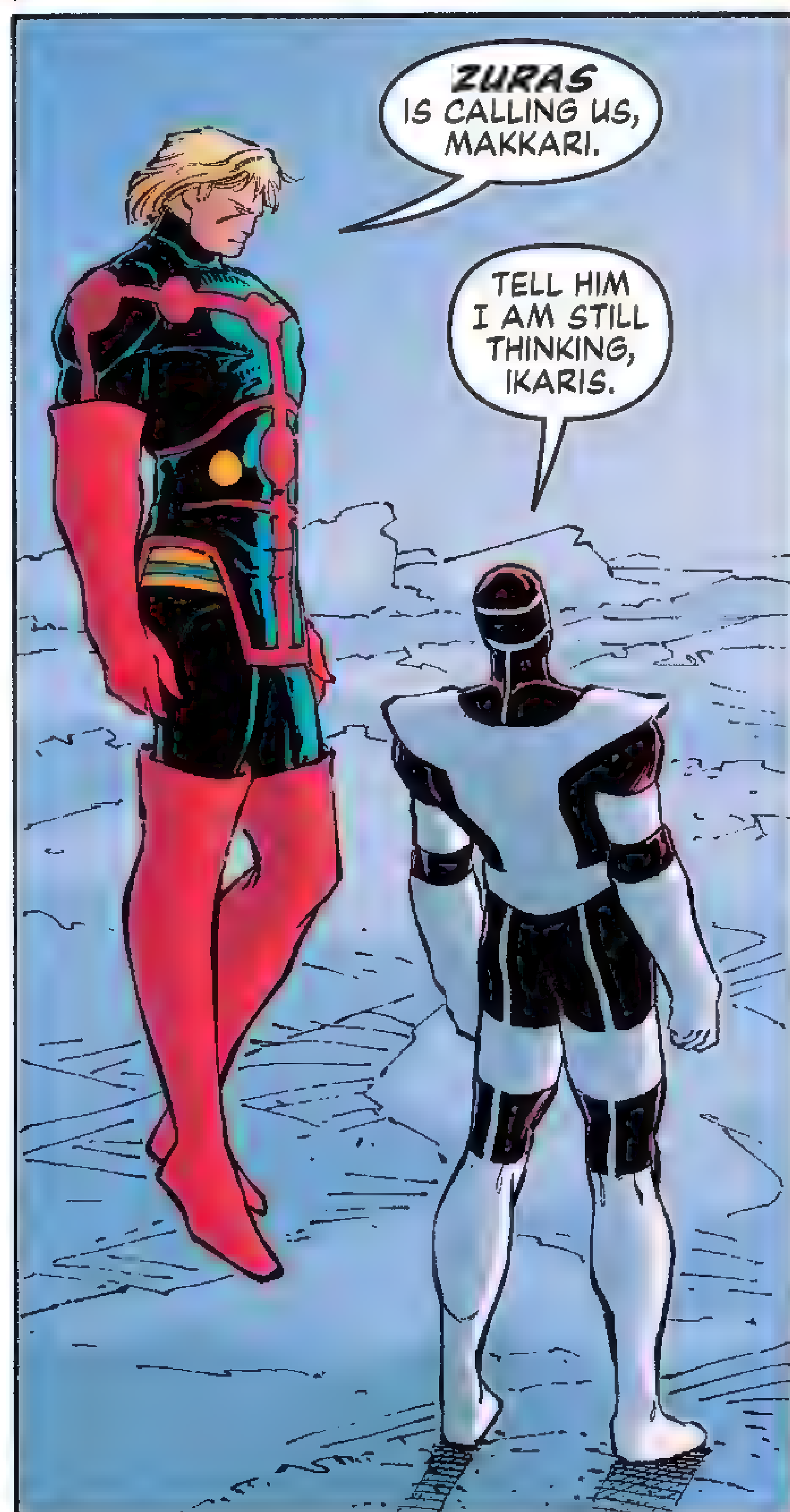
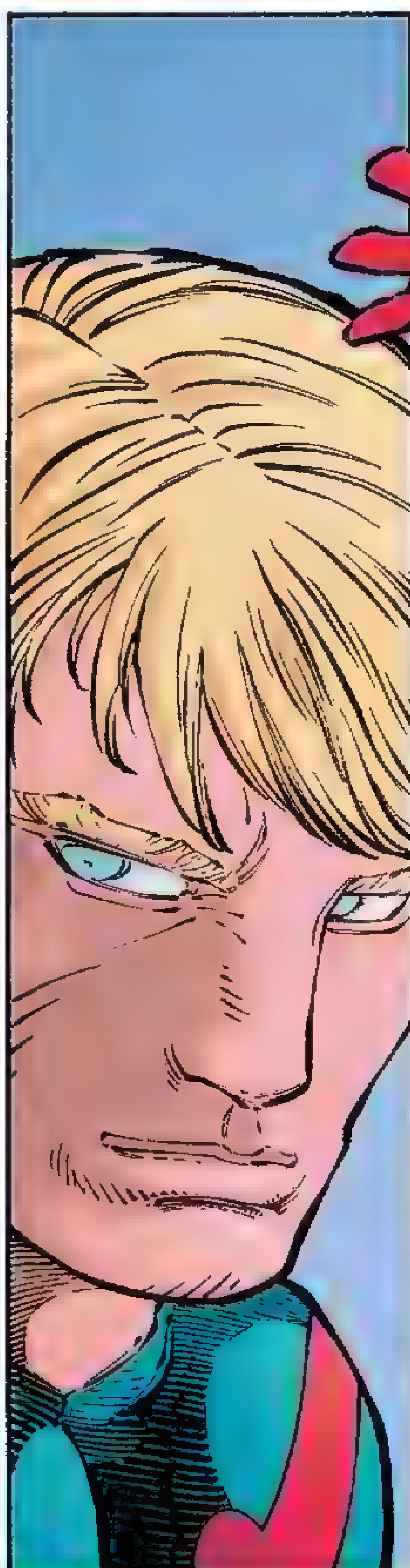
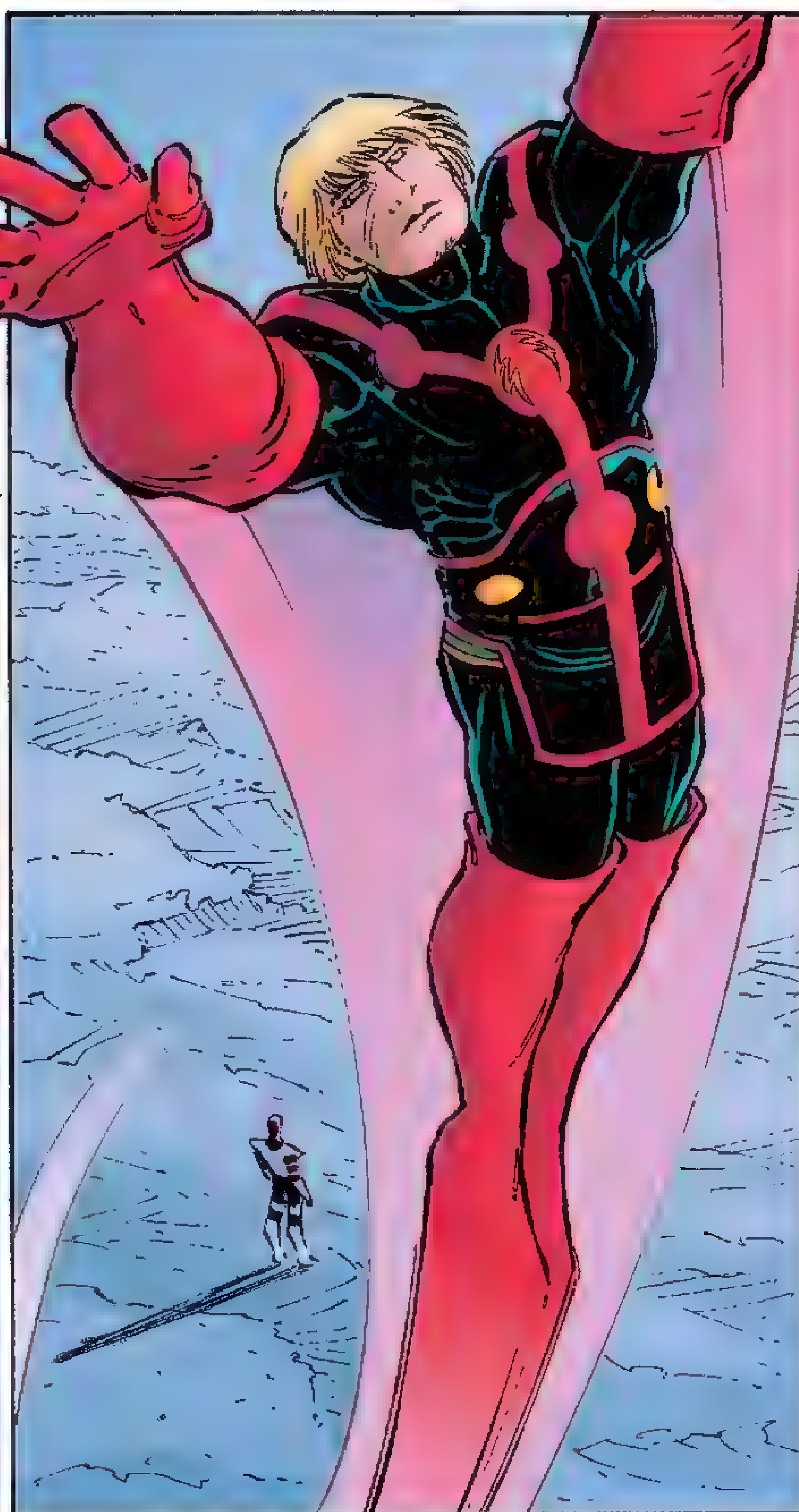

Gelt says you are Skadrach, Eternal. That you are possessed by the spirit of the Celestials. Is this TRUE?
I AM AS YOU SEE ME, KRA.


There is a song the children of the Changing People sing, Makkari. It is called "The Skadrach's Doom."
All who love you will hate you, All who revere you will despise you, All that you care for will be destroyed, only when it ends can there be a beginning.

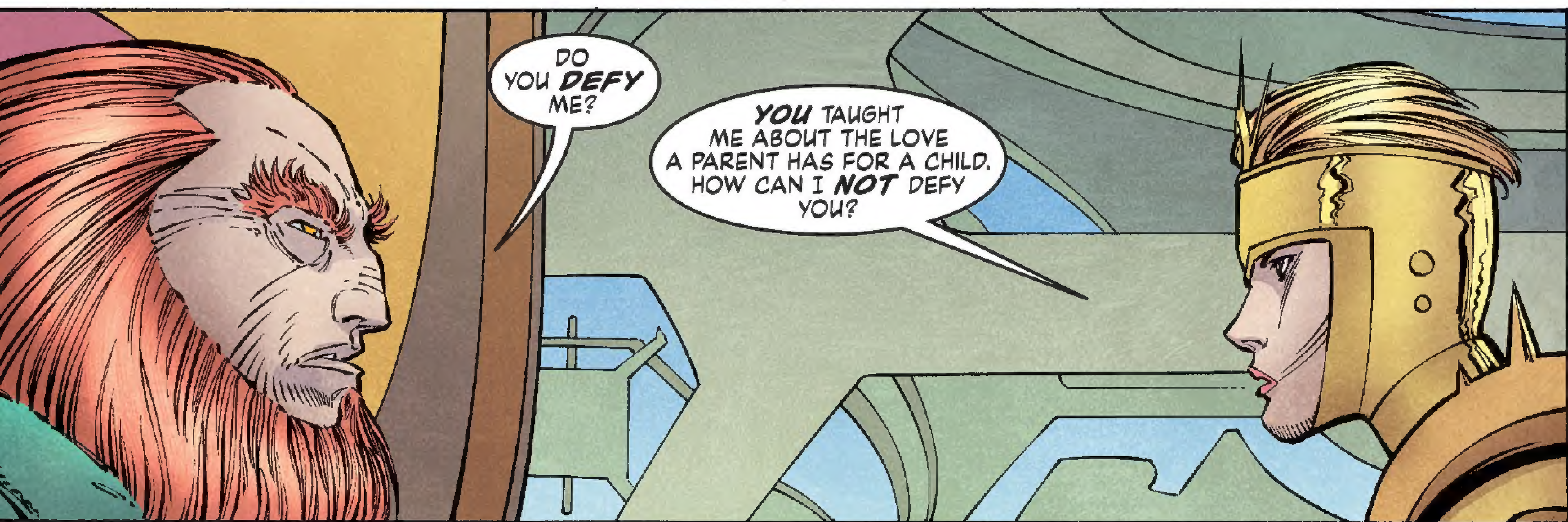

If you are Skadrach, I cannot fight you. You will destroy yourself and all you TOUCH and all you LOVE without ANY help from me.

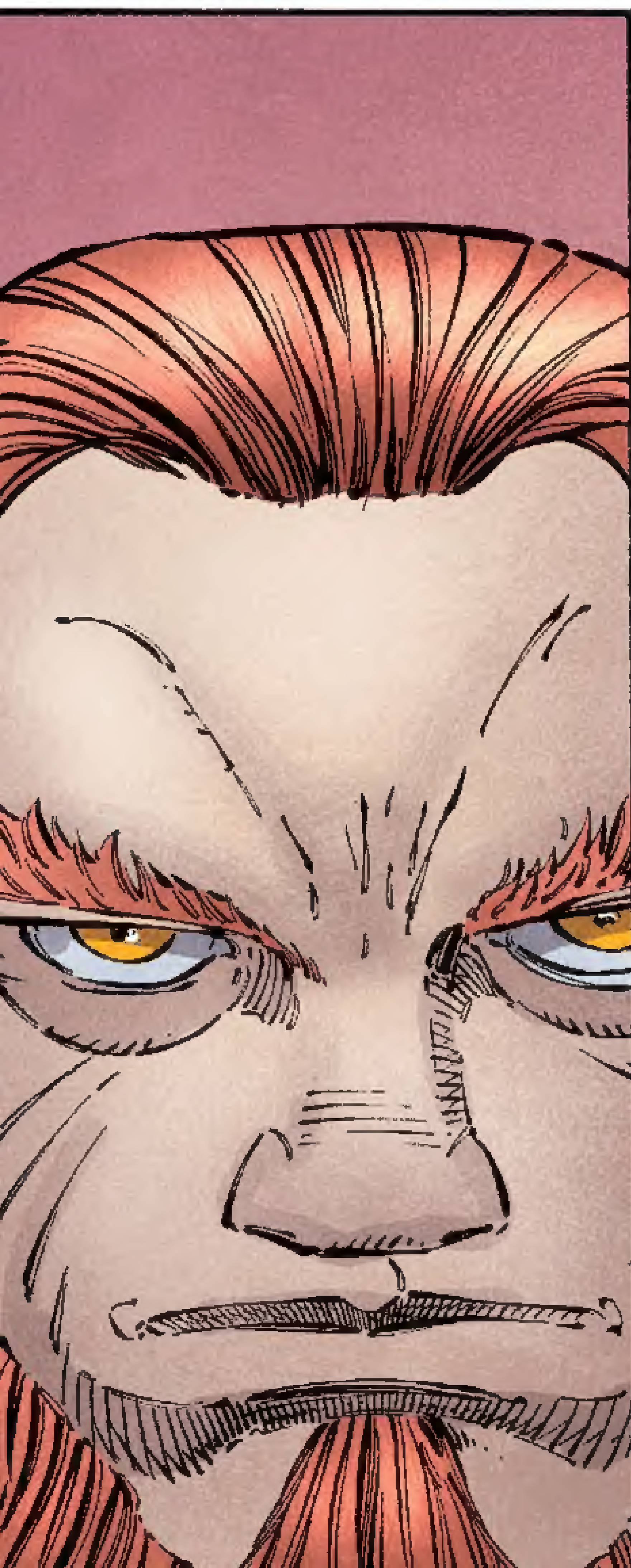





WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT, MAKKARI?
I'M NOT ENTIRELY CERTAIN.



ZURAS IS CALLING US, MAKKARI.
TELL HIM I AM STILL THINKING, IKARIS.



YOU CANNOT KEEP THE CHILD HERE!
IT WILL LIVE A FEW YEARS, AND THEN DIE, FAR FROM ITS OWN KIND.
AND YOUR DOG WON'T?
A CHILD IS NOT A DOG, THENA.
OBVIOUSLY NOT, FATHER. THE DOG IS YOURS, AFTER ALL.
IT NEEDS TO BE AMONG ITS OWN PEOPLE.
NO.

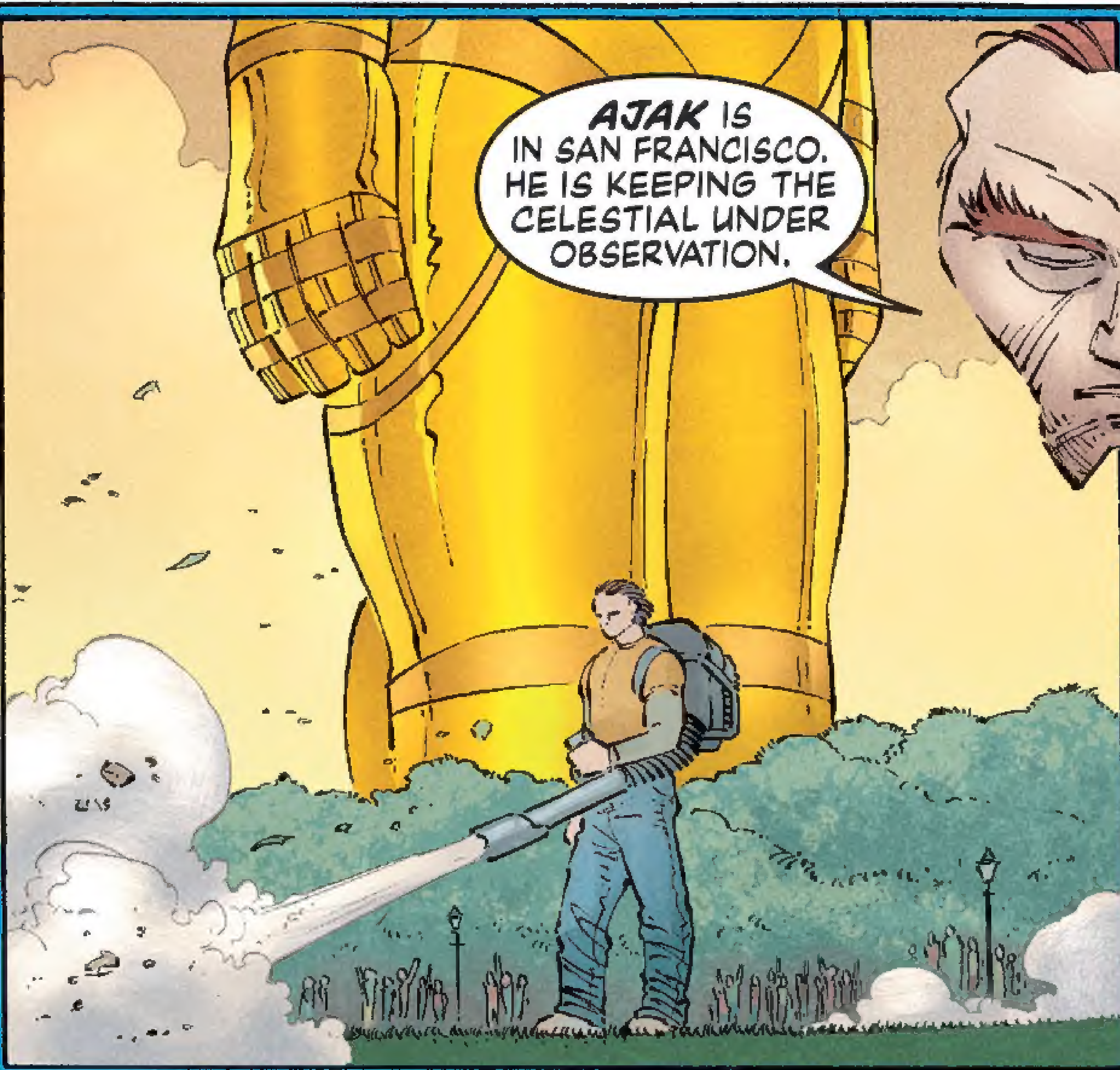




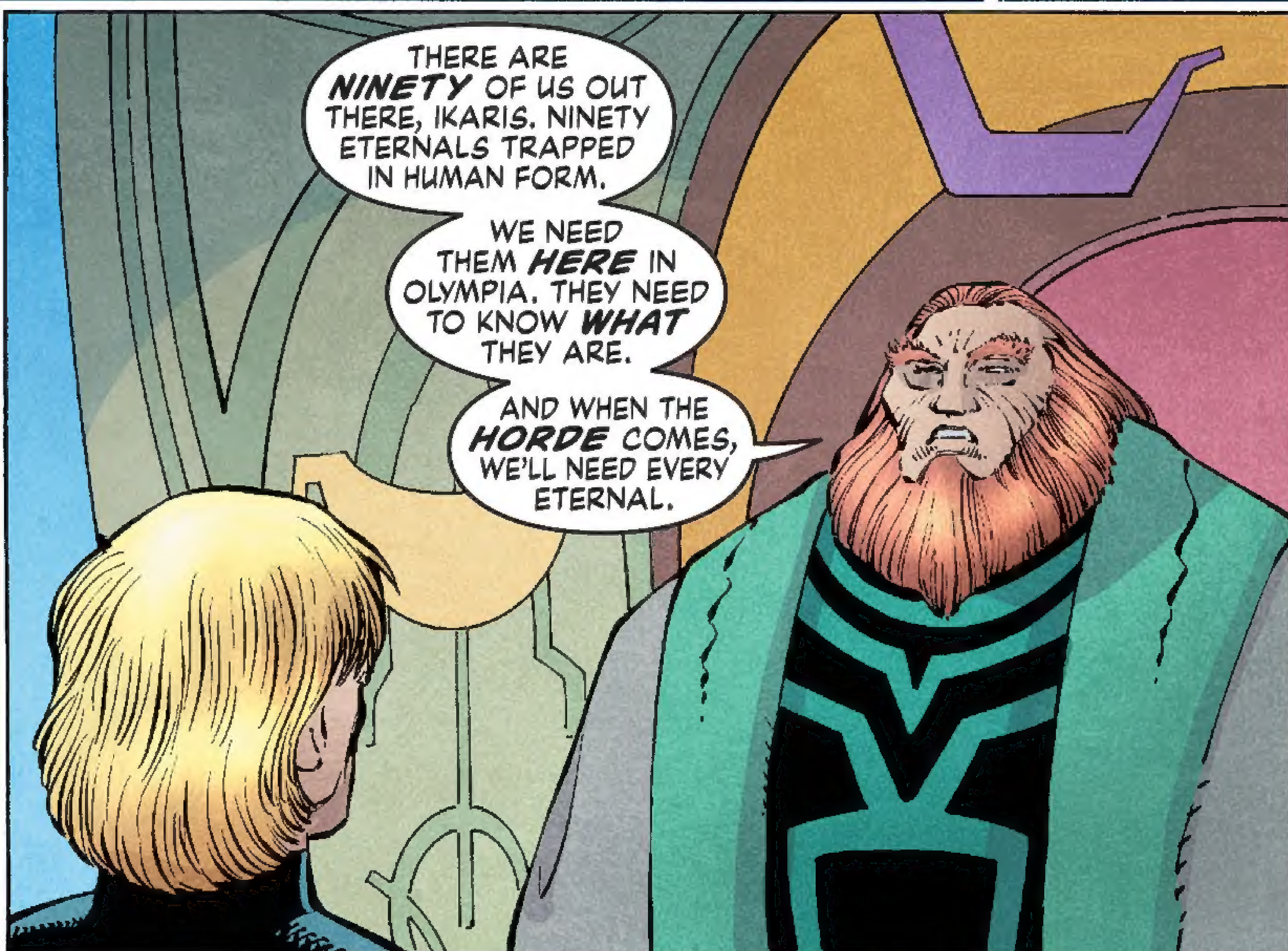


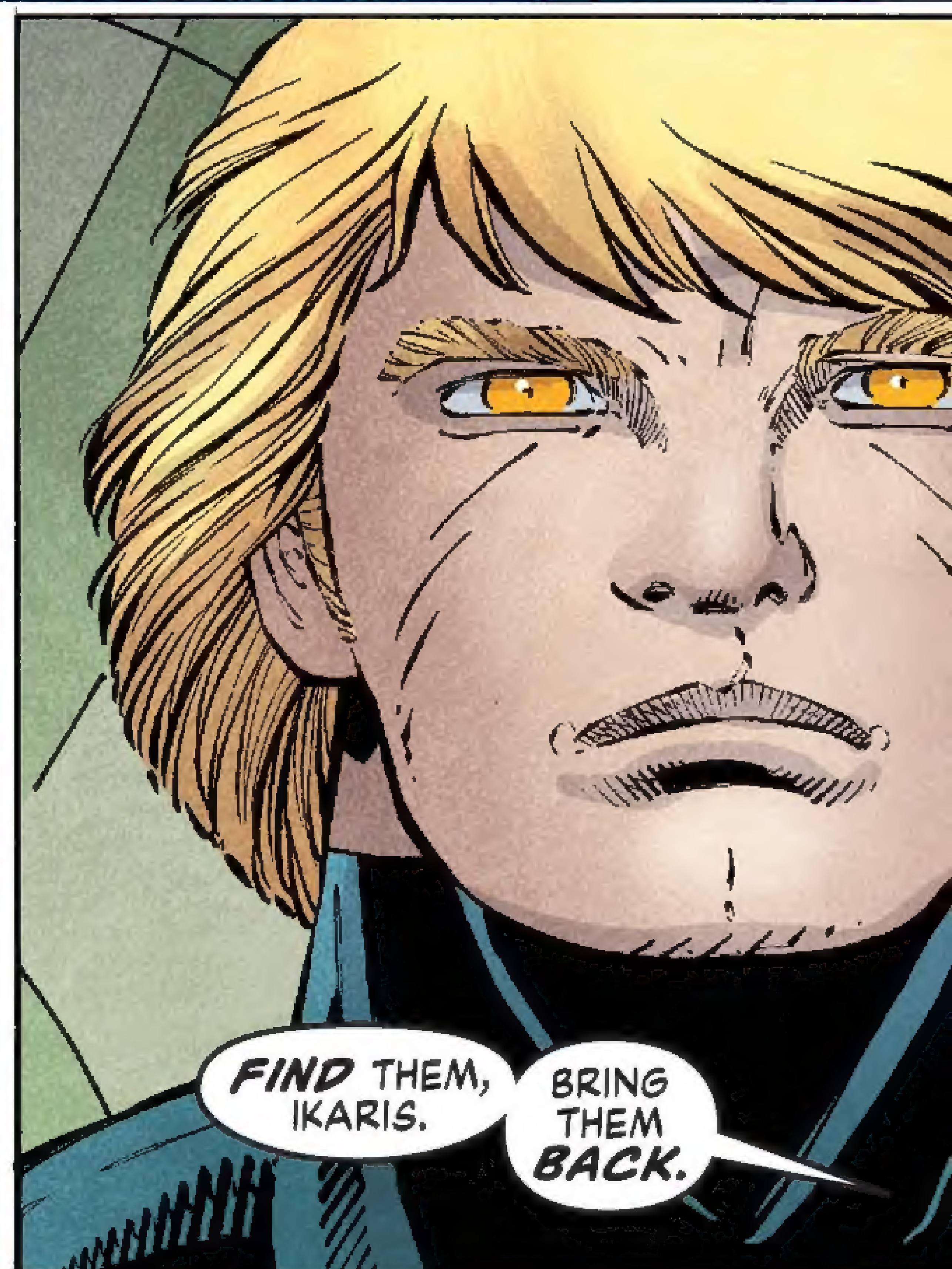



I HAVE A TASK FOR THE TWO OF YOU.
ONLY THE TWO OF US?


AJAK IS IN SAN FRANCISCO. HE IS KEEPING THE CELESTIAL UNDER OBSERVATION.


DRUIG HAS RETURNED TO VOROZHEIKA. HE SEEMS TO LIKE THE IDEA OF HAVING A COUNTRY OF HIS OWN.
"THE LAST TIME THAT HAPPENED..."
"YOU DEALT WITH DRUIG BEFORE, IKARIS. YOU CAN AGAIN."

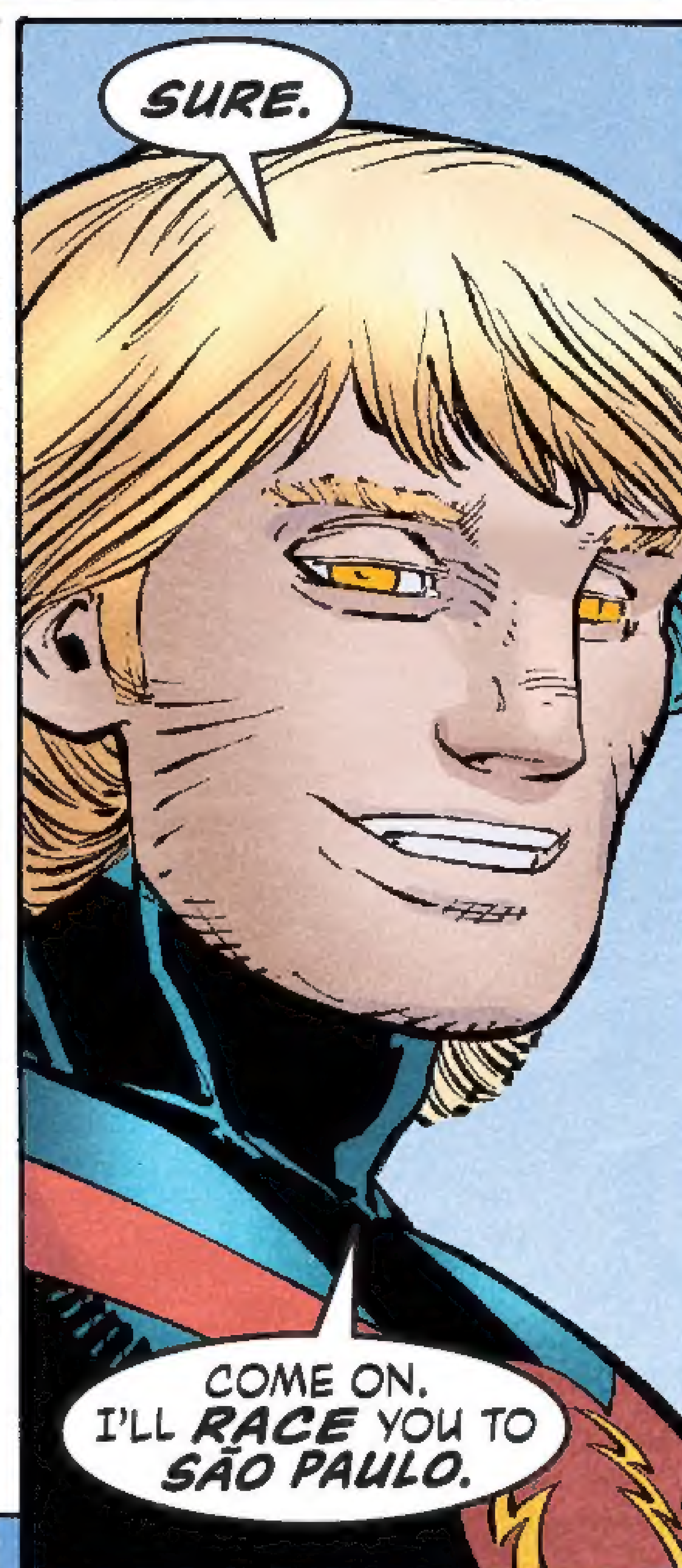

THERE ARE NINETY OF US OUT THERE, IKARIS. NINETY ETERNALS TRAPPED IN HUMAN FORM.
WE NEED THEM HERE IN OLYMPIA. THEY NEED TO KNOW WHAT THEY ARE.
AND WHEN THE HORDE COMES, WE'LL NEED EVERY ETERNAL.


FIND THEM, IKARIS.
BRING THEM BACK.


BELLEVUE HOSPITAL CENTER
Curry, Mark
tern, Emergency









THE BEGINNING...





ZONE